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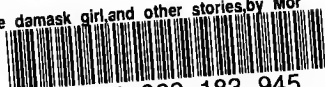
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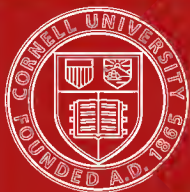
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THE DAMASK GIRL
AND OTHER STORIES

The Myth of Pelican Dome

I

MEN often do what is gloomily incomprehensible to them afterward. To some this is habit, and their whole sad career is an accusing mosaic of accidental destinies, of which the most ill-timed and accidental of all is death.

Samuel Clifford West was in no sense a man of this limp and weather-vane variety, and having thus negatively defined him we know that he was of the masterly disposition that holds the reins of Fate firmly, and when the animal balks or frisks, whips it back to the track of Will and makes it prance to some purpose. If such a person forgets himself for a critical instant along life's journey, the consequences to his mind are something as if the forces of nature should pause and forget to act for a few minutes: everything would be what? when the forces undertook to resume again.

West had not slept for four nights in his mad speed to reach his sick friend. Why couldn't this oleaginous stage man hurry his brutes over the hills?

Everybody might die at this rate and no one get to the others' bedside. He sat by the driver contemplating whether to hurl him out and take the reins or angle for sleep.

The stage extended behind him the remote distance of six tiers, the possessors of each seeming to form a separate community of their own. Clifford ignored all the inhabitants of this ark, disliked them, imagining they were in secret conspiracy with the driver to walk his animals up the steep spots. Then the four sleepless nights conquered, and he knew nothing, sitting bolt erect asleep.

"What is the name of that mountain?"

These are perchance innocent syllables. You would expect them to bring forth only such vocal ripples as Pike's Peak, Mt. Washington, Marshall, Marcy, Indian Head or Adam's Apple, or some other distinguished sounds according to the geologic locality: the locality most affected in this instance was Samuel Clifford West, and if he had been driving Fate at his usual pace—but this was the critical moment of pause.

A feminine voice spoke the words, and almost sleeping though he was, West knew it to be the most wonderful of voices. He wanted to turn and gaze in the questioner's eyes to explore the source of the sweet freightage of sound, and resented when the driver appropriated the

question and replied, "Great Dragon's Tooth, ma'am"—but now all the laws of West's being were reversed. In five minutes under any other circumstances he would have been conversing with this melody-gifted sylph, whose voice was affidavit of her charms: what did he do in this instance but fall hard asleep again in fifty seconds?

"Do you know the legend of that lonely hill?"

"No, ma'am; but I know the owner of it."

She sweetly related the legend, though the driver, nearly swamped in an ocean of sand, could do no more than nod and grunt appropriately at the pauses without quite gleaning the sentiment. The fable mingled with West's dreams, and somehow through the clairvoyance of sub-waking consciousness he was certain that the myth of Pelican Dome was told for him, and in his somnolence he hazily fancied, how or why he could not tell, it was an invitation, a suggestion, almost an appeal.

The story was of an Indian maiden of matchless beauty, persecuted by distasteful lovers until she resolved to retire to a desolate place and await the coming of the One whom she had seen only in fancy. She was certain he lived, though he tarried and came not, for her fancy's vision was clear and real. Then she set forth to find him, telling none of her people why or whither she went. The very next day the lover she sought came, only to find the

mountain deserted. Far and wide he followed her, always one day late, because she sped so swiftly in her zeal that he could not overtake her. He knew her course, for she was ever asking those by the way if they had seen the beautiful youth whom she described—although she had never seen him herself—yet when he came on after they recognized him as her desired. Disheartened at last, he betook himself back to the mountain, determined to remain there till death if she did not return, and that night she came to him.

West should have turned then and taken a short path across the meanderings of human history: he let the magic chance slip by, only the creaking of the springs belabored the silence that followed. Suddenly the rocking vehicle sailed round a curve and began to descend a three-mile slope, extending before them a marvelous panorama of intercepting valleys distantly vested in the deepest, glossiest blue. Clear at the bottom the road forked, and some of the passengers changed to a smaller stage in waiting; in the new wagon they took their relative positions—but West had seen her face.

There was a party of three women who were traveling for the benefit of their baggage, which had to be transferred and counted after them, consuming fifteen minutes of expert enterprise of the two drivers and West.

They knew they had fifty-seven packages, including the incidental cameras, dress-suit cases, foot wear, umbrellas, parcels and literature-bags, and they insisted upon checking them all off twice. At length the battle subsided and the stage that had brought them bore away relieved and exulting. The second conveyance was just to steam off when the young woman who was now dominating all of Samuel West's personality addressed the driver with an eager exclamation :

"Please wait one moment ; I've been seeing them all the way up, and I must have this one."

She sprang lightly out and plucked a four-leaved clover, her head skillfully averted from West. The three baggage women looked in astonishment at her, thinking haughtily that it would take a long time to collect enough such grass to fill another bag.

In climbing back her dress caught. It was another glorious opportunity for Samuel West, the man of no regrets, because he always garnered the occasions that life presented him. Why did he not leap to her assistance and pave the way to acquaintance after the fashion and promptings of his burning desire? This is why : he was ashamed of his timorous procrastination, and felt that he was already deep in her contempt ; he would have stammered and not known what to say, he, Samuel Clif-

ford West, who had been to Ceylon, Greece, Yakutsk, Zululand, Paris, Patagonia and Boston, and talked to all the women of these nations in their own engaging tongues; wherefore, rather than blush and mumble for the first time in his career, he remained like common insensibility or a copper bust seated where he was while this girl, who eclipsed all his vivid anticipations of the infinite feminine, disengaged her own finite skirt and mounted to her place alone. Now she rightfully hated as well as despised him, which made two in the company who felt that way.

"That's Defile Inn," remarked the stage man, pointing forward with his whip.

"Oh," answered West, "is it?" nervously snatching at the handle of his bag.

They rounded up at its entrance, where Clifford West alighted, and it was his last chance to give or receive a slight human message. He let that go, too. He was chastening himself in gall and rankling scorn; it was beyond retrieval, never could he regain that priceless prestige before his own soul which this mortifying incredible behavior had forfeited.

Without looking at the only person he was then conscious of in the State of New York or the state of existence, he disappeared into the hotel. The stage rumbled on to St. Michael's Lodge.

II

West's friend was recovering. When it was no longer necessary for him to stay about the place Clifford tramped off to St. Michael's to study the register. She would have arrived there June 29th, a whole week earlier. The names of the three feminine baggage agents were transcribed boldly in antagonistic scrawls, with those of several single gentlemen, and one massive family tree even down to the shrubs. On the whole, the 29th had been a good day gastronomically for the Lodge, but there was no signature by any drift of fancy mistakable for hers.

Clifford interviewed the clerk discreetly.

"Stages go on beyond to four points twice daily," was the hope-terminating rejoinder.

Inquiry was useless, there was not a single clue; she had vanished into the broad world and everything was ended. So he said aloud as he wandered home, and then satirized his folly, asking what there had been to end.

Edmund Trent sat on the veranda regaining his health.

"You can't hide it, Cliff; even the chambermaids see. Something's astray in the upper altitudes."

West gave his friend the story.

"I never was a callow pulp of inaction before," he

bridled defensively; "yet this was the critical moment for which the wheels of the ages had turned for me, and it's gone."

"She's married and your star was protecting you," ventured Trent, to inspirit him.

"She's not married, and she loves me. I know she is suffering just as I am, and we are lost to each other."

"Yes, you are both lost, wits and all, and suppose you begin by finding yourself first."

"How?"

"You were the class poet, weren't you?"

"Oh, well."

"And have done some poetic tricks since?"

"A few."

"Yes, your *nom de plume* is at least a 'Minor American Poet' already. Now, I'll tell you. Ashmere's on the staff of—what's that popular magazine all the girls read?—write the Indian legend into a poem, put in civilization, the stage coach, yourself, the four-leaved clover and the 'heaven-tuned' voice. Make Ashmere publish it in his next issue, which is August: she'll read it and the lost will be found."

"I don't see it."

"Oh, she'll write to you through the magazine office, and then reunion, fond reconciliation, and, if necessary,

mutual recognition, though two simpletons might be perfectly happy forever without recognizing."

"Your brain's affected, Trent; you'd better go to sleep."

Yet West did it, and managed to convey in the beautiful cipher of poets a revelation to one illumined by love's X-light—if she should ever see it—that the American lover sought and haunted the same mountain to find the lost Caucasian maiden of 1904.

Then Samuel Clifford West returned to the hills, took up his abode in Shady Crag Cottage at the base of Pelican Dome, and spent each day upon its summit. The convalescent Trent was now fled, so there was no creature but himself to know how utterly silly he was.

Pelican Dome was no longer as it used to be in the days of the enchanting Indian beauty. Now the gentle millinery of civilization often fluttered in its soft winds, through its foliage peeped cannibalistic-looking lunch baskets, for it was the finest mountain in all the grand quiver of peaks from which to gaze off on the beauty of the world without a lofty penitential climb before and after.

The twenty-ninth of August came, and in two days West must abandon the hills for austere practical life. The twenty-ninth was the memorable date.

It was a quiet, delicious morning, and the mountains

were sheened in a rich, warm, hazy glow ; a sweet gentle melancholy pervaded heaven and earth as summer, just departing, poured forth its treasured culminating effulgence for man. West ascended the Dome and threw himself upon the ground, feeling all nature summoning the wondrous unknown in the glad vibrations of his tumultuous blood. At such times there is a yearning for the presence of a consciousness as wide and deep and thirstingly insatiable as one's own. Everything primitive in man grows urgent and passionately throbs for escape into more illimitable life.

West did not at once perceive the object lying open on the ground a few yards off, though he could have told that magazine from one mountain peak to another. It was turned down at his poem ; he looked at it, lost in the question whether she for whom he had sent out his song had placed it there for his coming. Something rustled, and they stood before each other. Ah, if he had known that she, too, might be silenced by the spell of love, while the blood reveled its wild betrayal through her skin.

He did not instantly speak to her—and when his words came they were not those he had contrived day and night through the waiting weeks.

She took the faded four-leaved clover from her breast and extended it to him.

A Very Rash Doctor

A Very Rash Doctor

SOME work kept me in my office laboratory, and it was midnight before I realized how the hours had flown. When I looked up I was startled to see a man standing in the middle of the room. How had he entered without my hearing him? I confess a chill ran through me as I quickly arose to demand his business. As I did so he became rigid and would have fallen had I not sprung forward to his support.

This seizure settled my nerves and I became my natural cool self; the gentleman was there to consult me professionally, in my capacity as nerve specialist. It was flattering, and I at once took great interest in him—a young specialist is susceptible to all recognition, even midnight or two o'clock in the morning recognition.

His fit lasted six and three-quarters minutes, but I brought him out safe. While he was in his stupor I noticed a revolver in his coat pocket, probably there in contemplation of suicide,—as I carried him to the sofa it knocked against me.

"You have perhaps saved my life," he moaned weekly, as he opened his eyes; "but, my God, I would rather die than suffer from any more of these attacks."

"Let us trust they may be warded off," I answered cheeringly; "lie still a while and you may then give me an account of your case."

He pulled himself up and began at once to talk.

"Time is precious," he cried, with an unnatural ring in his voice; "if it does not happen at two o'clock to-night I'm lost! I shall know it's an incurable affection of the brain."

He was much excited, and gripped for his watch, almost tearing it from his pocket.

"Calm yourself and speak," urged I; "these catalepsies are quite curable if directions are strictly observed."

"Ah, there is hope, then, is there? Hope! I don't know, ah! but hear me, doctor; hear my story before you venture encouragement."

He took a little sip of the healing liquid I had prepared for him and began.

"Four nights ago I had no idea of coming to the city; Providence may be in it, pray Heaven it may. Just at midnight I fell into a waking dream. I saw myself winding through streets to a handsome house, which I entered without ringing; I hurried up stairs and passed through

two doors which I now distinctly see, and found myself behind curtains screening a large and elegant room. In the centre of this reposed a richly elaborate coffin.

"As I waited three young men entered, two of them almost carrying the third, who was sadly under the influence of drink or some stupefying drug. With horror I divined their intent, but it was impossible for me to stir or lift my voice. They conveyed the unresisting victim to a settee, removed his garments and decked him in funeral attire, and lifted him into the repository of death. As they began to screw down the cover, rendering the receptacle impervious to air, so that the occupant must soon die of suffocation, I broke forth into a terrible shriek and awoke from the trance. I was dripping wet from an agony of perspiration and trembling with exhaustion."

The narrator paused, and I was about to put some questions about the condition of his digestion, when he resumed:

"For three nights that vision has recurred, always at the same time, and always indicating two o'clock of this very night as the hour when the tragedy will transpire. Yesterday I could endure it no longer and took the train hither, meaning to visit a specialist on the brain, and idly fancying that my presence might avert some foul calamity. Now, sir, you have my remarkable experience from

beginning to end, and I throw myself upon your professional wisdom."

I meditated profoundly, recalling everything in psychiatry that might throw a gleam on this startling problem.

"Have you relatives in the city?" I inquired, making a shrewd guess.

"Some cousins," he answered, "who are much above me in wealth, and as I rarely come this way I do not even know where they live." He was a little uncomfortable under this query, as one might be who was considered an inferior country relation.

I got up and walked to a cabinet of chemicals, turning on two more electric burners as I did so.

"Sir," I said, "your case is serious but not hopeless. I believe I can cure it."

Those who wrestle with the complicated pathology of the human nerves will apprehend my reasons for having a mirror behind the bottles of this cabinet, which enabled me to observe patients when my back was turned. I began to compound a mixture, keeping an eye upon the mirror. "The brain," said I, rattling the bottles diligently, "is an organ of wondrous tunes; sometimes the player is super-physical, by which I mean that the agencies that are about to produce events act upon a sensitive mind beforehand, premonitorily. I do not consider your phe-

nomenon to be of such a sort, yet the first step toward cure is to convince you that it is not, in order to remove the dread of an outward calamity in some way associated with you. Do you think you could trace your way to that imaginary abode?"

The man's face glowered up behind me with vivid satisfaction, and for a moment all traces of illness vanished.

"I can't say that what is so plain in my mind is a map of actual streets and corners, but the route is as definite as if I had known it for years."

"Good," said I; "let us at once unseat this fixed idea by proceeding to the place and proving that your tragedy is but diseased imagination. I will get my coat."

The mirror again revealed my patient's delight, but as I turned to him his face was long and wan. I went into a side room for my light top coat and medicine case, but scooping out the bottles I quickly inserted in their stead a couple of loaded revolvers.

"Lead the way," said I, returning, "and we'll see what the spirits can do for us; your dream can have no truth, but a doctor is always more comfortable with his medicine box about him for emergencies."

I amused him with a recital of desperate cures as we proceeded, so that he must have been a very much shrewder fellow than I took him to be not to imagine that

my head was filled with nothing but nervous afflictions.

We reached a residence at length among the best of the town before which my guide paused.

"Strange," he exclaimed, with a palpable shudder, "here is the very front I saw in my vision!"

It was his way to remove barriers and then await my initiative.

"Come," I said, "you walked in without obstruction in your trance, let us see if it can be done now."

It was a notable corner mansion, and although the front was absolutely dark the large doors swung open to our trial, admitting us to an ink of gloom.

"Goodness!" I whispered; "they must manufacture the dark here, keep by me."

With my case under arm I grasped his elbow with my left hand, shakily, as if perturbed, drawing close to him, and slipped my other hand into his pocket, abstracting the pistol it held. We ascended the stairs silently, passing through two doors into a curtained retreat; there was light beyond, illuminating a magnificent apartment, rendered sombre by a costly casket and its funeral appurtenances.

My companion swayed the hangings aside to look at his watch, letting them fall again into their place—I had

a second's glimpse of him, his face was ashen pale and his hand trembled violently. I caught the moment of darkness to slip his pistol into a corner of the little chamber.

"Just two," he murmured, and on the instant a door opened and three men, ranging about the age of thirty and clad in high fashion, advanced into the room. The dream had progressed correctly to this point; but reality now deviated, for none of the lot was in liquor, yet their visages were hard with the emblems of dissipation.

I began to wonder if I had done well to venture into the power of four desperate plotters in their own lair, whose purpose toward me must be as evil as they appeared rude and merciless, when one of them touched a button in the wall and the curtains slid back, exposing us to view. One of the men called me politely by name:

"Dr. Allen, if you will kindly step this way we desire to engage you for services in your line."

My companion followed me as I advanced to a proffered seat near a table facing the four.

"Gentlemen," I responded pleasantly, "I am not usually consulted in this manner, but my professional offices are always at command."

Without further ado the oldest, whose features wore a brutal and repulsive strength, delivered himself:

"We trust, doctor, you will not object to indulging in

a whim of ours for a couple of days for a fee of twenty thousand dollars—there is the money.”

He tossed a roll of bills on to the table in my direction.

“The nature of your whim might make some difference,” I suggested.

“No, it would not.” He spoke with an accent of sternness that was uncomfortable. “You shall know our will. A brother of ours disappeared a year since, and we consider him dead—in truth, we have the best of evidence that he is so. This, however, does not satisfy the legal sticklers, and a fortune of several millions hangs fire until we prove his demise—in other words, its division awaits the proof. Now, *we* can’t wait, and we say, d—n the legal obstructions; if Charles isn’t on top of the earth he shan’t keep us out of our share, and since he’s dead he shall not exclude us from his.”

The speaker’s face knotted up until his eyes glared at me out of a very repellant twist.

“I cannot raise the dead,” said I, to smooth his temper and countenance.

“No one wants you to,” he snarled angrily; “that’s not in you doctors’ line; you can make the dead in plenty, but you can’t unmake them—but you can prove that my brother Charles is where——”

“You want him?” I prompted.

"Dead," he scowled.

"How, sir?" I brightened, "explain yourself—if this is all you ask of me for that money and it can be done in two days."

His face untied considerably on hearing me speak thus. I had touched him right and he sailed through the rest of his plot in less choppy humor, while his very first words were like a dirk thrust to me if I had but chosen to show it.

"Why, you see, you're the picture of Charles."

"And by feigning death and going through a funeral as becomes a corpse the authorities will admit that Charles is no more."

"You catch on quick, doctor; you're all right."

I knew I felt ghastly within, but they were admiring the shrewdness of my wit and did not see it.

"You perceive there's no fraud about it; he's dead, it isn't killing him."

"Excellent," I cried, with a twinge of inner sickness, "and couldn't I help you a little farther? As attendant physician on his last hours I could give you a certificate of his death."

They applauded this proposal warmly, I was winning on their confidence; yet I knew that if I went into that

coffin I should never come out of it: these shrewd rogues wouldn't take that risk of my exposing them.

"We must have things ship shape," said I. "Is the coffin comfortable?"

"Elegant," said they; "you can see for yourself—try it."

I took off my overcoat and flung it carelessly away; they could tell that it had no pistol in it. I buttoned my trim coat tightly about me so that a weapon would have shown through my pocket, and they could see at a glance I was unarmed. I knew their eyes were open for this very thing; they had no fear of me now, and quite relaxed.

"We'll show you," said they, and a couple lifted off the entire casket top, exhibiting a rich soft fluff of satin that would have been most seductive in any other environment.

"And about ventilation," said I, with innocence; "one can't carry in a day's air."

They were a little bluffed, but I spared them notice of it and gave them time.

"We'll slide the glass," was their leader's happy rejoinder.

"Quite adequate," I agreed. The glass was expressly built in not to slide, I had observed.

"Now, gentlemen," said I, "not to consume your time and mine, when is my funeral to be?"

"Day after to-morrow; we must give you time to become a little corpse-like, and will request you not to eat until after the final ceremony."

"Ah, um," ejaculated I, with a deep sinking; "four or five meals is not a long abstention—for twenty thousand dollars."

"We hoped you'd see it so," they chuckled oozily; the air of the room was wringing wet with hypocrisy, but their grilled smiles showed what cheap and easy prey they thought me.

"And until the pleasant event—I mean the funeral—where am I, uh, er, to—fast?"

"In the box there," the chief rake answered bluntly, the devil playing in his eyes. "You must train for your duties, you know, and you're much safer shut up than running loose in the house. You might want to run away."

They all looked at me, grinning.

I forced the elements of a pleased smile and put them together on my face as best I might; but I felt my spiritual teeth chatter aloud as I saw myself murdered in that box, suffocated by these demons. Withal I could hear my own voice, as the dead may hear the living in another sphere, saying with astonishing composure:

"Your cause is just. If a man is to deserve his salary he must earn it, and if I may further advance your plans, I have with me some harmless drugs which a few hours after taking will lend me the appearance of having died of a malignant and infectious disease; my aspect under their influence will serve to both relax my features and to frighten off the inquisitive from your doors."

They swore big curses of satisfaction at me; that would make strong the only weak place in their plot! The leader cried:

"We'll raise your fee to twenty-five thousand!"

Why shouldn't they—to fifty thousand—when they would take it back from my dead hand?

My chemical case was on the table by me, and I snapped back the catches, talking of what my drugs would do; my brain for a space was in a fiery whirl; I only know that when things cleared I was like polar ice, looking down across ten cartridges at four huddled men with hands high aloft.

"Clasp your hands on your heads," I advised thoughtfully, "you may have to stand that way some time, and I wouldn't tire you."

Keeping my aim I backed to the nearest window, and kicked out a great pane of glass; my foot struck an impediment beyond, and I realized that the window was

heavily shuttered. There was no doubt that three of the fellows were armed; but I had taken the weapon of the fourth, and him I sternly ordered to advance and throw open the shutters.

"My friends," I said, "let us understand each other. You intended to smother me in that box and to bury and leave me buried in good earnest; you wouldn't have dared to let me out with a knowledge of your villainous conspiracy. And where is your brother Charles? What good would all this plotting do you unless he is certainly dead? He might return any hour to dispossess you. If he is dead from fair causes this trickery isn't necessary. It's clear, then, that he is dead already by foul means, or that you're going to kill him. By intention you are therefore twice murderers: I shall treat you as such. I'm a good shot, and if I see the least movement toward pistol-play I will shoot the mover dead. I have the advantage, and before you draw on me I can finish you all."

They were hard men, lost to all human sense, but their nerves were debauched and they had no mind to put my skill to the test. They may have been thinking, too, of the process by which they had lost the whip-hand that night.

"Are you a detective, or just Dr. Allen?" sallied their leader, attempting humor.

"Just plain Dr. Allen, a mere doctor." I could quite endure their smartness.

Watching narrowly, I extracted a call whistle from my vest, and standing in the window prepared to blow a shrill note.

"Ah," I said, taking the whistle from my mouth unsounded. Exultation had painted itself on the ring-leader's face—it fled before a wave of rage when I didn't blow.

"You would have liked it," I remarked. "Would it bring up your friends in the house?"

His oaths uncoiled like a steel spring and I was sorry I had taunted him; these full drinkers are like blind bulls, apt to demolish their skulls on rocks through sheer internal explosion. I had too many to handle easily; three would manage more amiably than four. The coffin top was still off.

"Climb into that coffin," I said to the irate big fellow sharply.

It took the snap all out of him, and he begged like a craven.

"I'll give you three," I said, "and if you haven't climbed I'll send sizzling lead down your backbone."

I made the others stand facing the wall while I relieved them of their revolvers, beginning at the coffin.

"Now screw on the lid, and screw it tight."

He thought I meant to murder him as he would have dealt with me, but he dared not scream.

"I'll only hurt you if you make a noise, and then I will hurt you," I vowed to him.

I made those three men pick that heavy casket up and bear it softly downstairs and out of the front door into the street, while I walked behind them with a taper in one hand and a pistol in the other. I marched them through the street a block, and under an electric bade them set their burden down and slightly slacken the lid for air.

Then I blew my whistle loud and long for patrolmen, and when after ten minutes none came I fired a couple of shots to wake them up. Still the squadrons of peace slumbered and time sped. The nearest precinct station was ten blocks off.

"Move on," I said, "and take the funeral with you."

Down the avenue puffed and staggered the cortege, the pall-bearers doing the first stint of honest work of their lives and making a terrible heave of it. Before the policemen's home I blew my call again and a batch of blues tumbled out to receive us. The mourners had to be well nigh carried up the steps from fatigue.

Three months after that, brother Charles of these blessed scoundrels came to my office. He was a fine,

bronzed fellow, to resemble whose corpse would have flattered any man. He was indeed the only human member of his family, all the rest being brandy-pickled rats.

"You saved my life, Dr. Allen," he said, wringing my hand tremendously with his strong arm. "My good brothers had dispatched a brace of desperadoes to do me up; they were on my heels and about to strike when the story of your great exploit was telegraphed everywhere, and they read it. Seeing they had lost their hire they turned informers, and had the chilled greed to demand for not killing me what my family had promised them for killing me. I spun them down two flights of stairs, their heads bowling over their feet and legs like ten-pins.

"By George, that last coffin scene, where you delivered your catch to the police screwed up in the box that was to have buried you, dims all the glories of common war."

Caton's Daughter

Caton's Daughter

RAMROD was the picturesque name of a little town which I have good reason never to forget. I pulled up there one Saturday at the end of a month's hard riding inspecting certain oil rights I had acquired, a sun-browned man whose outward garniture was the worse for the storms traversed but whose blood and appetite were probably the best in the country. I was unshaven and undoubtedly rough-looking, and that is what enabled me to pass an inspection and perform a duty which a man more glitteringly garbed could not have risen to. It is well that I did not know on setting out that I was to meet a lady.

After stabling my horse and washing at the hotel pump I went in to supper. They put me at the only table occupied by guests that night; I confess the other travelers surprised me, I seemed to them the usual occurrence in that country. They did give me one glance as I sat at the other end of the board, or at least the man did, which seemed to satisfy him of my innocuousness; I concede that I did not see that the young woman looked at me

at that time. Thus neglected, I could study them under my long rumpled hair and above my month's beard without impropriety. When the father—it was clear at once that he occupied that pleasant position toward the young woman—had settled me and placed me on my level he resumed a didactic conversation which I seemed to have ruffled for an instant, and being a little tepid in his prevailing emotions and determined, took no pains that I should not hear. He had tabulated me as a non-existence, perhaps a guess to be repented of by him—and the girl, for she was not much more than that, spoke her replies as clearly as if she had been talking to me.

“Berta, I can tell you something you will find out before you are much older: the best husband gives you plenty of money and lets you alone. You are in a position then to be happy without the fatigues of a vindictive affection. For strong love is vindictive and maims its object to be sure of it. A man who loves a woman much is a menace to her peace and happiness; he worries her into rapid old age. Are you listening, daughter?”

“Very respectfully.”

“Reginald Lidding has the right points for a husband. He will idolize you in public and let you alone in private. You liked him well enough in Europe and wherever you've met out here. It is an appropriate family alliance

on both sides, and rich girls must do their duty in this respect. You owe it to your country."

"I don't love him."

"All the better. You will have the ascendancy. Let him think you do, just enough to keep him faithfully irritated. He will mildly dangle as long as you live and be proud of you without pestering fervency. There'll be no scandalous divorce. I hate them."

"It would be wicked to marry without love, wouldn't it, papa?"

The elder gave a sound as when a cat elevates its back, and paused with the coffee cup before his lips.

"I shall put an end to your nonsense. Reginald will be here with a clergyman in an hour, and you'll be married this night. That's why we came to this God-doomed spot. Do not go out of my sight."

I had stopped eating and was gazing straight at the young lady to see the effect of these astounding sentiments. She lifted her large eyes to me and for at least three seconds a current of—I don't know what—passed between us. Then she calmly lowered her glance and answered, "Very well, father," and completed her supper.

The reason why *I* had come to this God-doomed place was now clear to me, though it was not so obvious how I was to perform my duty.

I thought it would be well as a preliminary to convince the tyrant that I was not alive in his sphere, and I took off my coat, throwing it over the back of a chair toward him, and, sitting in my flannel shirt, lighted a pipe and smoked; which affected him so deeply that he did not need to look at me to illustrate his contempt. The landlord, humbly obsequious to this pair, requested me to desist from smoking in the lady's presence, and I left the table and took a careless look at the register. The names of these interesting strangers might bring some light.

"Jerome Caton—Denver."

"Ethelberta Caton—Denver."

The ill-kept host's offensive suppleness was fully explained. I registered an assumed name, for my own happened to be well known in those whereabouts. Strolling out to the stable ostensibly to examine Mildred after her long journey, I took notice of the other mounts, of which two were first class and the others indifferent. The stable boy having bedded and fed the animals, would not be in again until the next arrivals, so after tossing the superfluous saddles and bridles into the loft and taking the best, I led the two good steeds out by the back way and tied them under a tree a little distance off, turning the others loose. It was pretty dark and they would not be remarked.

There was a rival hotel of the genus spirituous with a lot of fellows of all sorts sitting about smoking and drinking, and from these I picked my man, a shrewd-visaged young cowboy, and got him aside.

"Friend," said I, "do you want to play a practical joke and make fifty dollars by it?"

"Sartin."

"Take your horse out into the country a little way and then come riding in high speed to the 'Three Chickens,' where Caton is stopping. Say you have important news for him, and tell him on the quiet but with great excitement that the Gaylor band have heard he is here and are on the road to capture him and his daughter for a big ransom, and that his time to get away is short."

"All right, I like that, you can trust me."

"I know it," said I. "Here's the spoil, and be quick, and cut the telephone between here and Fakirs' Nest afterward."

I returned to the hotel, and in about seven minutes there was a furious clatter of hoofs, and the cowboy burst in with a perspiration which I did not see where he obtained in so short a time. He got Caton into a corner and whispered my story with fine impetuosity. The Gaylor crowd were the terror of the country at that time, and Caton didn't wait to ask questions—though he remembered his

duty to the young man with a fifty dollar note—but ordered the horses brought on the instant. The stable boy came back pale-faced to announce that every horse was gone.

"They must have sent some of their men in ahead to do that and hold you," offered I in an undertone, "but that needn't keep you. I have two extra steeds with saddles out in the heath which you can take. Say nothing of this to the rest but come with me. If you can get away quietly without anyone knowing the direction they will lose time following."

He looked at me doubtingly, lest I might be a Gaylor in disguise; but the daughter urged:

"Quick, father, come! They'll be here!"

"Hold the rest back," I motioned to the cowboy. Once out of the house we ran.

"Saddle that one for her and I'll do this for you," I directed Caton.

He had Ethelberta mounted, and turned toward me. I pricked my animal with a knife and he reared frightfully

"Stand back and I'll have him down in a minute."

He obeyed, and I leaped into the saddle, giving a touch with the whip which brought my horse alongside the other, whose bridle I seized, and with a sharp word of urgency to the spirited brutes we were off. Caton howled

murder and various other things in his fury, for he thought I was a Gaylor indeed and had taken his daughter by force.

Fakirs' Nest was ten miles off and we made the ride like wind. Slackening as we reached it to enter decorously, I inquired of the first man for the house of a parson. Then I brought my animal close to her's and asked:

"Is that where we are to go?"

She reached out her hand, which was trembling, and I took it and kissed her.

The ceremony was hardly over, for the good man didn't know our danger and I dared not hurry him, when a reveille of hoofs sounded outside and Jerome Caton stormed in with Reginald Lidding and someone in a very dusty white choker, and three or four more, who served as native constables and deputies, behind. Some one had marked my advances to the cowboy in the other hotel, and as that discreet young person had disappeared they put things together and concluded there were no Gaylors in it. It was therefore an elopement, for Caton remembered that his daughter had not screamed. When they tried to telephone to Fakirs' Nest and found the wires down they were sure.

Caton towered over the scene and thundered his ultimatum with lurid passion.

"Unless you renounce that cowboy scoundrel this instant, never see him again and get divorced, I'll disown you, and I hope you'll be judged insane and locked up as a lunatic for life."

"Whatever he is I love him, and I have married for love," she answered, putting her hand into mine.

A disagreeable sound was gathering outside, and it took definite form in the shrill and fierce yells, "Put tar on him! String him up!"

Two of the constables had stolen out and incited a mob for this outrage, to gain Caton's favor and not doubting his approval. In calmer moments he would have silenced them, but he was now too far the victim of a deadly bile to be himself. The protests of Reginald and the two clergymen had no effect on the angry crowd.

I saw they meant business and that the foolishness must be stopped.

"Pardon me, Caton," said I, "you hardly want a crime on your soul," and I took out my card and handed it to him.

He got to a chair looking like a fool.

"Marsden," groaned he, "why didn't you tell me who you were and not let me make an everlasting idiot of myself?"

"Because," said I, "I have been looking for a girl who would marry me for pure love."

Call Again

Call Again

GRIDLEY DOBSON made the impression on strangers of being foolish. It was at that time his only capital, and he said of himself that his blank look was his bank book. If he could have taken his face off and sold it, it would have been killing the goose that laid the golden egg. There were many people with facial circumstance and dire blankness behind it who would cheerfully have exchanged their beauty for Dobson's external vacuity if a trade of interiors could have accompanied the barter. In these times a man can afford to look as meek as a paving-stone if within he has a mind qualified to keep his stomach thankful with digestible provender.

And the best of it was Dobson never said he had a mind: that was left for those who thought he hadn't one to investigate.

Every person of truly great intellect cherishes an ideal beckoning him toward the summit of his dreams. Gridley's dreamland aspiration was to be famous for his resources in collecting debts from the stony-hearted, so that on hearing his name or seeing his simplicity approach

they would cringe, relent, capitulate, and pay upon the presentation of his card—

G. DOBSON, ESQ., ARTIST OF DEBTS.

saving him the delays, rebuffs and insolences to which common collectors are heir.

He moved toward this ideal with an inflexible resolution hidden by a vacillating countenance on which were written vacuums and heavenly confidingness.

Hiram Hooper was an honored gentleman of large affairs, some sunny and most shady, like a forest landscape. He had never enjoyed the pleasure of hearing of Gridley Dobson, and he had lost nothing by it, for the losses to such men came rather from knowing Dobson than from being denied his society.

Let me say for those who may design to give up a lucrative profession for the collector's lot after hearing of Gridley, that a collector resembles the delinquent boarder. Naturally, the one gets only the toughest morsels to eat, the other the toughest debts to collect. It is human nature to have it so, a little weak, a little wicked. The creditor exhausts his own ingenuity as well as his Christianity on the debtor first, then passes the abandoned character on to the fangs of the professional extractor with orders to extort or torture up to the limits of the

law. Commercial surgery without anæsthetics is the collector's school of medicine, for his healing instrument is pain.

Such a debtor was the multifarious and nefarious "Hi" Hooper.

Hiram Hooper's creditor sighed remorselessly as he gave his account into Dobson's talons to collect. "He is a lemon with a brass rind," said the creditor more in anger than in sorrow. "I can't crack him, but there is plenty of juice in the acid abomination if you can get at it. He's worth hundreds of thousands and has owed me this two hundred for a year, and I need it; he's rich and I'm poor, and I've earned the sum twice in running after it. All I ask is, get it. You can't hurt him, he's feeling-proof; if he fell into the lake of fire he'd get a mortgage on it; and I'll tell you now, not to set you up, I haven't any hopes of my money."

Dobson arranged his face in accordance with the wish and plan of nature and shambled into the spidery presence of Hi. This man had risen from poverty to riches by the virtue of saving his debts. He never paid them, although he made many. It is one of the mysteries of the uninitiated how such men's credit lives, but it does and grows, and the fact is Hi was so malicious a man and hard a dealer, never showing mercy when he got an-

other by the hip, and being the great source of borrowable ready money, that men trembled to refuse him or press a claim. By the grace of saving he was therefore always gaining in affluence, which brought him respect and envy and crowned him as a potentate for the young of the town to admire and model after. Whoever despised him was very cautious about it, well weighing the material consequences of letting Hi hear of it. So he was feared because he was rich and rich because he was feared.

His start in life was the fruit of a few maxims which he had found enough for this world: "Convince men you can do them, then squeeze and squeeze hard." "Bluff where you can't squeeze, you can frighten most men." "A Bluff is as good as a Blow." These principles had rewarded him with half a million dollars or more, and every dollar was a new and multiple squeezer for more dollars.

Hi would not have parted with his virtues for all the sins he had neglected in his hurry to be rich. He held himself infinitely above sins and sinners who couldn't grind a neighbor's nose so honorably as not to go to jail for it. "I've got the cinch on ye," was his legal tender, and with the long lash of his accomplished tricks he kept his victims pretty still, leaving fresh for his further operations the yet unfleeced, the waiting and even longing to

be fleeced, and the get-rich-quick aspirants after the property of others, whom Hi could always fold up in their own schemes and have considerable cloth left.

When Gridley Dobson waved the bill of Angel and Angel's in the face of this devourer, in his own sanctum, and even flattened out its creases on the devourer's desk, meekly requesting a settlement of it, that mighty magnate Hi Hooper thought it the greatest joke since the theft of Adam's rib. He looked at Dobson's Assyrian monument front, placid as the solitudes of non-existence, expressionless as a weather-washed tombstone, and first winked at it, then laughed outright, then shouted and roared in ungovernable delight. Nothing had ever pleased Hi so, and a laugh in his life was as scarce as pearls in a poor-house. As this blockhead was a nobody, he could be as impertinent to it as he pleased, and in truth he had been in such a hurry to cheat all his life that he had never heard of politeness as a lucrative quality.

"Who are you, anyway?" cried he when the cachinnations of his glee were somewhat stilled. "I haven't the money to-day, but come again, come often. Sit down, won't you, it does me good to see you. I swum, I wouldn't mind paying you a salary for coming, if you'll charge it. I'll bounce my durn'd doctor and take you aboard. A laugh's as good as a pill, old donkey, and a dum sight cheaper, let me tell ye."

G. Dobson came again, came twice, came several times, at varying hours of the day, dunning, and Hi always had the same kind of a fit when he came, while Dobson was stupidly contemplating things with not the ripple of a smile nor the crook of a frown. On going he sat down on the curbstone in the hot sun, looking more like an idiot then ever, with Hi, still shaking in the merry writhings of his seizure, beaming at him through the window. You wouldn't have thought that Dobson's gudgeon eye was registering the manner of prey who went and came at Hi's.

One day he gave Hooper a supreme dose of hieroglyphic amusement by saying that sometime he would wish he had paid that two hundred dollars every time he had called. That would be two thousand dollars! What fun! Hi thought life was a flower garden with such a cheerful whale coming regularly to remind him of his creditors' gehenna. Business was bliss, but the sorrows of the defrauded were an extra asset which he had never before so lusciously enjoyed.

One day several well conditioned farmers gathered in Hi's office to round off a deal worth thousands to Hooper and minus the same thousands to them—only they did not yet know it. Hooper had been obliged to bait his skill at incubating human avarice with sugar-coats of sanctimony

with these wary captains of the hoe, as he sneeringly called them in his office privacy, angry at their foolish aversion to a fleecing, acquired through having earned their farms scratch by scratch. And being more used to honest communion with the earth than to flirtation with the mysteries of Hi's finance, they were naturally cautious of his gaudy projects to enrich them in a year, although not averse, since they had confidence in a man who was doing so much for their good nearly gratis, as Hiram demonstrated he was.

Yet he had captured all their convictions, and to-day they were with him awaiting the last of their number to bind themselves with signatures and go ahead to ruin, when in stalked the everlasting tombstone, and before Hi could get a syllable out to hush him, Gridley Dobson broke forth in rasping thunder:

"I say, Hi Hooper, when are you going to pay Angel and Angel that measly little two hundred dollars you've owed them till it's sprouted? Haven't I been here sixteen times for it now? and ain't I getting tired, don't you think? You told me you'd never pay, but I'm going to squat with you the rest of my days and stick to you like a sin if you don't. Come, now, pull it up, and give me a chance to get to a few of your big debts which'll keep you doing nothing but paying, when you begin, for a couple of years."

Hi was of a clammy purple after this cyclone; the farmers scrambled to their feet, clutching helplessly at the air toward Hooper, their lips open but speechless.

The expression of zero on Gridley Dobson's face renewed Hi's spirit; he recovered himself.

"Get out of this office, you peskified blackmailer!" he yelled, fumbling for his big ink-well. "Get out quick, or by the hoboes I'll put a blot on that barn outside of yours that won't come off."

He would have thrown the ink-well, to stamp a conviction on Dobson, but farmer Andrews stepped between.

"Neighbor Hooper," he said, mildly and sorrowfully, "we believe you're ail right, but in doing large business with you, involving our homes and farms, our wives' property and what we can borrow, we ough' to *know* you're all right, now, hadn't we? And mebbe we've not been quite so shy as was proper, and mebbe you won't take it inquisitive or interfering if we ask you to show you don't owe such debts as this, this"—he looked at Dobson, hesitated, stammered, and finding no word to fit him, passed on, leaving a gap—"says you do."

They all stood still, heavingly agitated lest Hooper should admit himself a dishonest skinflint and rob them of their great promised chance to triple their substance by giving it to him, Dobson not saying a word, Hi white but masterful.

"Show it? yes, and, what's more, prove it," Hi bit out in forked wrath. "You go to Angel and Angel, you im-pydent punkin-top, and tell them they're sued for libel and blackmail. I'm doing it, Hiram Hooper, millionaire. I'll teach 'em whether a man of my repetation can be dishonest; 'tain't possible, I couldn't have come to where I be and been dishonest. Gents, sit. I'll have my lawyer here in ten minutes and he'll sue right before your eyes. Be ye satisfied now? Suing's evidence, ain't it? Putting the law on a man shows what he is. I always knew them Angels and Angels was raskels; they meant to hinder you from getting rich. Now let that Solomon-looking critter out and we'll get to money making; we can't have such slanderous varmin clogging the honest springs of wealth and undermining the constitution of progress, hey, Brother Andrews? No one could get respectably rich if we did."

The joke on G. D.'s *tabula rasa* and appeals to their cupidity struck home. Hi was himself again. Reaching his long finger out and stretching far forward over his desk, all eyes followed him toward Gridley Dobson and rested on that astounding physiognomy.

"Baboon!" fluted Hi, with his other hand shading his mouth in mock confidence, rolling his eyes tragi-comically. "Would you believe *that* thing?"

The tension loosened, and all the men broke into uneasy guffaw, restrained in consideration of where they were, the great issues at stake, and a remnant of suspicion.

"We've been taken in by him, Mister Hooper," spoke up Farmer Clarkson, "but it's a duty in these latter days to suspect your own brother of crooked doings in finan-shearing. I feel I may say I kin trust you."

"I guess we're all converted," joined several, and none opposed.

"Let's sign right here with this cantankerous existence to witness; it may be a lesson to his nose not to pry." This was Farmer Oldham's contribution, a former school-master both learned and metaphysical. He had the art of grafting homely phrases on to his scholarly elegance, so that while the superiority of his language was felt no one thought him over-elevated in mind.

Dobson took from a spacious receptacle in the tail of his coat a package of papers and spread them out in portentous sadness. They were unpaid bills of all ages and sums from various firms and individuals against Hi Hooper.

"Gentlemen," said the collector with marrow-freezing calm, "I call on you to judge: are these names dishonest?" And turning to Hi he said, "When people hear about this they won't be so afeared of you as they was. A

bluff is as good as a blow till the other feller strikes the blow."

The company examined the bills, turned them upside down, looked at their backs, looked at the floor, at the ceiling, at everything but at Hi and Gridley. They were all very shamefaced.

"Hiram Hooper," said Farmer Andrews at last reproachfully, "I ain't for calling hard names, but there's a time to speak. You're an infernal scallawag; kiotes and sneaking hienies wouldn't herd with ye."

They took their hats and filed out one by one, leaving Hooper undulating in his chair, staring stonily after the vanished thousands.

"Are you ready to settle that little matter of Angel and Angel's?" inquired Dobson in suave tones.

"You haven't got your money yet," roared out Hi, as a long audible breath, that might have been a wail or a war note, died away.

"Never mind, Hi," responded Dobson sweetly, with the first twinkle in his visage that had ever adorned it in the presence of Hi, "I'll call again."

The Scientist's Wife

"How beautiful is marriage!" meditated Professor Paul Isling as he walked across the snow to his college classes, waving his hand back to Glorian in the doorway. "Yet I could wish my wife wouldn't read all my letters in my absence, for there is a rich lode of jealousy in the womanly composition."

Professor Isling was the youngest man of international note on the faculty, and he had brought the lovely Glorian home to participate in his honors only a few months before. He was a specialist in a novel branch of research, where he had shown the wonderful perspicacity that had secured him a full department before thirty.

The section of science at this moment controlling his particular attention was love. He was writing a history, psychology and anthropology of it, and had reached the critical stage where in order to make his observations exact it was necessary to correspond with experienced lovers for data. He sent them a printed rubric of questions very skillfully devised to penetrate their layers of reticence and convention and lay bare as it were the machinery of love in action, and he had gained a host of re-

plies upon the faithful assurance that no eye but his should peruse the answers.

By advertising he had also obtained a vast collection of authentic love letters, which daily increased; while in some instances, those of especial promise—and here was the pinch with Glorian—his zeal for truth required him to impersonate the lover and send forth epistolary Cupidesque darts from behind the armor of a triple-guarded pseudonym.

At the last visible corner the professor threw a kiss, and a curious smile flitted through the classic marble of his features. “Perhaps if she reads them to-day it will correct her melancholy unconjugal suspicions,” was his thought as he turned up to the laboratory to meet an appointment with some new specimens.

Glorian went to the study and seated herself at her husband’s desk thrilling with love. She had a feminine sense of honor and was not quite easy in this work; but its justification was her heart, and she had a scientific excuse.

There was a new heap of letters, and as she read she arranged them in their previous order, for Paul was not yet to know that she was keeping abreast of him in his noble achievements. Her ideal had recently broadened into oneness of intellect as well as of soul with her hus-

band, an ideal how contrived it is hard to say, but perhaps wrought out by a comparative study of music and art under the guidance of a dialectical theory of knowledge and ignorance. She came to a little note without an envelope, so small that it almost escaped her eye. It ran :

“My Dearest : Meet me with a carriage to-morrow evening at eight at 79th and Madison. I can go to supper with you at Sherry’s. What a lark it will be ! You know my difficulties, and I may be a little late. Ermia.”

Glorian drew her hand across her eyes. Could the depth of her husband’s investigations into love justify this ? Did it not call for the application of a counter research ? She felt herself rising to the emergency : she could go disguised to the appointed place in advance of Ermia and personally verify her husband’s original methods.

Professor Isling left his home that evening with all the tenderest marks of affection, which Glorian returned with a stern sob slowly surging for manifestation but only glistening outwardly in her eyes as greater love. For she had a premonition. It might be the last time she should kiss him, the dread morrow might find her going home to her parents in Boston ; yet she was not weak and she courted the crisis of truth.

When Paul was gone she firmly dressed for duty, concealing herself in a long fur cloak which she had that day procured to dim the Professor's scientific insight.

Isling repaired at once to the hotel of his particular friend, Professor G. Cumberland Grafton, whose subject was astronomy; he had arrived only the night before from Europe en route for an observatory in the West, and was to meet Glorian for the first time on the following day.

"I must tell you once more I don't like this, my dear Paul," said Grafton. "It may satisfy your scientific conscience on the subject, but in mine, which isn't scientific, merely the raw untutored thing, I feel that it's not quite fair to your wife for me to go out to-night in your place. If she comes it will be a shock to her sensitive nature. Is it good to bring up a young wife by initiating her into a closed carriage with a stranger? Still, under protest, I'll defer to your advanced knowledge as a specialist on women, which I'm afraid you'll find to be advanced folly, and I'm dreadfully certain Glorian will never end hating me for my part in her illumination."

"Have no fear," answered Paul. "Does study of everything else give us knowledge, and is study of woman only vanity? I have applied my principles to Glorian and I know her thoroughly; I cannot fail; I run no risk

of endangering her affection, which I wouldn't jeopardize for worlds, for I love her with all my heart. I shall only cure her of an unsophisticated curiosity by a slight emotional shock, an electric bath, from which her devotion will emerge brightened. I must be free to operate as science dictates, even if scientific exactions are a shade drastic from the feminine point of view; for if I cannot probe into all the recesses of human emotion without a wound to my wife's love my work is paralyzed. Go, and if she comes make love to her; let her think it is I as long as you can; call her Ermia; it will make an impression on her mind; and I don't think she'll again meddle with the canons of experimentation."

"Oh, well, if you're so determined, I must; the consequences of your ruse be on your head."

The carriage was announced, and Cumberland entered it to depart on his mission.

"*Bon voyage!*" said Isling through the window; "I'll await your return to me here."

It was a little before the appointed hour when the driver turned into Madison at 79th, but Glorian was already there to precede Ermia, and she stepped into the coupé closely muffled to guard her husband from seeing her face; Professor Grafton's features were also deeply obscured in the collar of a great coat as he assisted her. The curtained door closed and it was dark within.

The man sat awkwardly silent and Glorian forgot her rôle ; she forgot that she was there to receptively observe the methods of research ; this was her husband, it was Paul, and she kissed him fervently in spite of his sins. He would soon discover that she was not the dreadful Ermia, she wanted him to know that if she had thwarted his researches it was only because of intense love, and then he would forgive her.

"Put your arms around me, darling," she whispered tenderly, and Grafton mechanically did so. He seemed reluctant at first, and she registered this mentally in her husband's favor.

When the carriage stopped and they alighted, Glorian, determined to preserve the disguise until she had disposed of her wraps, still kept the fur close about her face ; but she could not forbear a stolen look at Paul, which was successful in spite of the care devoted to the shielding collar. By this glance she saw with horror that her companion was a stranger.

With great effort she was able to walk in steadily, and when Professor Grafton turned back his coat and faced her, to betray no shock. The few seconds of preparation had given her self-mastery ; but the Professor, believing that she now saw his countenance for the first time and expecting a temporary collapse, was himself

stunned by her calm, and his features controlled themselves only through excess of stupefaction. Through the down which disclosed only her eyes Glorian managed to steadily command him to wait, and left him.

She was now convinced that her husband had no personal complicity in the affair, reasoning that Ermia must have written the note to this stranger, some amateur devotee of actual love as against science, from whom Paul had wheedled it to promote the cause of learning and truth. She could not respect one who would expose the secrets of a loving women even for the enlightenment of mankind, and as it was evident that this person still believed her to be his expected Ermia, she conceived a plan to combine his discipline and her escape. Her heart smote her for the true Ermia waiting in the frosty street, but she choked this tenderness down.

With an exact copy of Ermia's note taken upon transparent paper before her as a model, she indited the following missive to Grafton in Ermia's writing, with which she had so many times nervously experimented that day, and sent it to the Professor by a boy.

"Dearest: I am timid before all these people, some of whom may know me, and I dare not face them. I might be recognized, and then what a tempest! Let us go to Philadelphia; take a night train and look for me in the

morning in the Broad Street depot. I don't know anyone in that city. Your Ermia."

Having guardedly seen this delivered into the right hands, Glorian's next thought was to reach home before her husband, and she quickly left the place.

In the open air she sighed joyously. If she could get this original researcher off on a silly chase he might be enough chagrined to make no further confessions to Paul, and if he continued to tattle Paul wouldn't have a suspicion that the unknown woman in the affair was his own wife. Paul would not forget the experience if he heard of it, either. She was safe from discovery and full of elation.

When Cumberland Grafton read the epistle he was distracted. He asked his conscience if Glorian had known all the time that he wasn't Paul, and had fallen in love with him, and he was not in the least happy over it, though he was one who unintentionally fascinated many charming women without their consent. It was the only logical thread, and Paul would get his punishment. Grafton cudgeled his wits, for something must be done and time was short, and decided that Paul must speed to Philadelphia to confront the fair deserter. Not long after Grafton burst upon his friend and somberly presented the note.

"It's from Glorian to me, read it."

As Isling read his ideas danced like avenging satyrs.

"What is to be done?" he asked, closing his eyes and recalling the rules he had promulgated for such occasions; "I can't collect myself. What a consuméd fool I've been! Principles don't walk in a sea of misery."

"Principles be shivered," said Grafton, briefly etching the singular events of the ride. "Hurry to Philadelphia, find her and bring her back to her senses and home if you can."

He threw some traveling necessities of his own into a bag for Paul, who was quite helpless.

"It isn't Glorian's writing," cried the latter wretchedly, "I see it all! She was infatuated with you, and supposing there was a real Ermia whom you knew, wrote in her hand to ensure your going; she thinks you didn't see her face and still believe her to be your Ermia. I know she had the handwriting, for there were slight scratches of new ink where the pen cut through her copy paper. Oh, these women! how little I knew about them!" The distinguished Professor bowed his head and sought consolation in groans.

Glorian kept vigil for her husband in vain that night, and by morning her fears were congested into poisoned convictions. While she was with the stranger in the car-

riage could Paul have been with Ermia? Was it, after all, a conspiracy between these two men and had she been duped? She sat looking fixedly through the window into the distance.

Professor Grafton, having passed a very bad night, went out early to walk off the dismal spectres of his friend's infelicity. He drifted toward Isling's vacant home and paused before it with a mournful scrutiny, thinking what might even at that hour be happening between the ill-fated pair in Philadelphia. From the shaded depths within where she sat weaving the threads of evidence, Glorian perceived her husband's accomplice. There he was as he had been last night, but with a cunning melancholy gravity; he had that unmistakable look of consuming virtue which she had heard of in the deepest rogues and which the innocent should never forget.

Did he know her and had he come pursuing, to sequel his escapade! Instead of an innocent apostle of science, was he a villain? It was most diabolical, for only collusion between this scoundrel, Paul, and Ermia, could embolden the wretch to follow up his imaginary conquest. A terrible feeling of helplessness and fear in the midst of these toils came upon her.

Her married life was over. Collecting the few things she still cherished and waiting for her persecutor to move

out of sight, she hastened from the house, and hailing the first cab, was soon being borne rapidly to the Boston train, leaving no word with the servants of her destination. Twenty minutes later a vehicle came tearing down the avenue containing Professor Paul Isling. A calm observer would have said that he had had a night of it.

He rushed to Glorian's room, and there, amid the rejected debris, the last hope that had sustained him perished. The worst was realized, he read her motives to their dregs: after writing the note to Grafton she had lost courage to execute the plan and returned home; when Paul did not appear, concluding her suspicions of him true, she had gathered her things and taken flight to Philadelphia to join Grafton as she had intended, but now with the resolution to remain.

In the extremity of his grief Professor Isling madly tore a mass of valuable love letters from correspondents to shreds and hurled them into the flames before he realized the nature of his act.

Though he felt himself to blame for leading Glorian into temptation, she had taken the irrevocable step, and pride now asserted itself, forbidding him to follow her further. He had dealt some heavy blows at jealousy in his book, calling it the vice of love, and he now took down the manuscript and read it over; all that afternoon

he spent indoors, incapable of seeing anyone, from time to time traversing a page of his chapter on "The Vice of Love." Dear as Grafton was to him, he could not comprehend his wife's infatuation for the astronomer. His readings gave him time to consider the probable verdict of the world upon his competence to write the "Psychology and Anthropology of Love."

One stern sad duty remained: he must proceed to Boston to break the news of the tragedy to his wife's parents. It was a harrowing trial, and as he rang the once welcoming doorbell his mind ran back to their wedding day and heavenly embarkation for the land of France. There was a sound of feminine approach, and he prepared to convey the sorrow to his mother-in-law as tenderly as he could with his own bereavement dark upon him. In the doorway stood Glorian.

When some time had elapsed in incoherent bursts of explanation and they were still in each other's arms, the Professor fervently said: "I have been punished enough."

Glorian could not be less generous. "Oh, Paul," she whispered, "I could forgive you anything now that I find there is no Ermia."

Isling was suddenly inspired.

"Glorian," he exclaimed, "we must hereafter work together; be my ally and second self in these studies of

love, I am convinced that a feminine mind is needed at the elbow of a man who would tabulate all the intricacies of a woman's soul. And our mutual labors, by giving love a scientific basis and dispersing the confusions of the emotions, will draw lovers together in the delicious unity of accurate knowledge."

"I can do anything," she replied, "if I never have to see that hateful astronomer again. He may be your friend and very respectable, but if he isn't too dear to you to be joked about, I feel sure that from letting his mind wander without restraint among the stars he has acquired the mental habits of an adventurer."

"You are safe for a year at least; he goes to his duties in the West before we return."

But on their homeward trip, which both declared to be happier than their best hours in France, she caught him flushing over a paragraph in the morning news.

"What is it, Paul?" she begged, in consternation; "has our terrible misunderstanding got into the papers?"

"No, dearest, thank God, not that, but prepare yourself for something of a blow. Professor Grafton's latest brilliant discoveries have just been published, and an astronomical chair in our university has been offered him."

"Will he take it?" she panted.

"He has done so. It was arranged yesterday."

She covered her face upon his breast.

"Sustain yourself," said Paul, with concern. "I have been a little bit of a traitor to you and Grafton, too, but I see I am caught and I must make a clean breast of it. Science leads one into such strange ways! There is a real Ermia, and she is a very dear girl, but she is nothing to me. I didn't want to see her wasted on a common man, and I laid a plan, almost deep enough for my ruin. I wanted Grafton to meet her in a very romantic and unusual manner, for he always looks at women through a telescope, as if they were remote stars. She is an investigator in my field, one of my special students; so, as Grafton is very peculiar and interesting, I assigned him to her as the subject for an essay. I wrote Ermia's little note myself. She was to have met him that night for the preliminary study—and would have done so if you hadn't intercepted her—and I can tell you she wouldn't have studied him quite as you did, love.

"Now, I didn't tell Grafton this, of course, but I made him think you would come, though I honestly didn't expect you to at all. I have used my skill and science with her to much better effect than I did with you, and I faithfully believe she's already deep in love with Grafton, though she hasn't seen him yet, and I rather think her essay on him will be a very unusual contribution to sci-

ence. I shall give them a formal introduction, which I'm sure will make things easier for you."

"He didn't study me like a distant star in the carriage," said Glorian, with a little shiver.

"My love," answered Paul, "I have generalized that when people imagine themselves married they lay aside their long-range telescopes."

The Damask Girl

WHEN Anton Verrol seated himself in the Pullman to cross the continent from the West, a very pretty young woman occupied the section opposite. For hours, as the train sped forward, her silken hair and soft-tinted skin engaged his attention, and he found it unnecessary to read for amusement or to improve his mind by observing the species of tribes they were passing through.

As the car became sultry and the bright-haired traveler vainly endeavored to raise her double windows, Anton, conscious of all her acts, stepped forward politely, lifted them, and having received her sweetest thanks, retired to a deeper study of the outlines of her shapely head.

She opened and closed a dozen current magazines scattered in her seats, examined the titles of a score of new volumes of imagination, and seemed dissatisfied. Anton's warm heart, troubled with the willing divination that she craved human companionship, moved him to lean toward her and observe, "We are passing through a beautiful country." It was a desert, but he had not noticed that.

In kind but decided tones she replied: "I hope you will

not destroy the good opinion I have formed of you," and relapsed into a frigid silence.

In the evening an accident occurred, piling the cars in a terrible heap. Shrieks and lamentations filled the air, steam hissed violently, and the strained timbers groaned as if themselves in agony. Anton, having tested each of his limbs by a separate act of consciousness and finding them whole, thought immediately of his attractive neighbor. She was wedged beneath a splintered timber and appeared to be dead. By a prodigious application of strength Anton lifted the beam and the girl sat upright.

"Thank you very much," she said, "I am uninjured. If you will be so good as to hand up my bag through the window I believe I will step out."

It was quite time that she did, for the flames were rapidly encircling them, and through assisting her Anton lost his dressing-case.

The survivors cared tenderly for the dead and wounded, as many as were not burned, placing the former in the Death Car and the latter in the Hospital Coach, which happily were the two uninjured carriages of the train, and then resigned themselves to awaiting relief. It was chilly, and all through the night they paced back and forth upon the sand to keep life in their veins. Anton kept the Damask Girl, as he had named her, continually in view,

and several times inquired if there was anything he could do for her, to which she always pleasantly answered no.

At midnight, as they met in their tramp up and down the ties, he essayed another conversation.

"It is well that it does not rain."

She replied, "I am conscious that I owe you my life and I am grateful. Please let me retain my respect for you as my savior without lowering yourself in my esteem," and with eyes cast down she passed on her way.

It grew exceedingly cold, the wind rose, and Anton perceived that the girl was drowsy and chilled. He paused from cheering and helping others, and having cut up some unconsumed timbers of a car with one of the wrecking axes, for the fire had now burned itself out, lighted them from the embers. Taking off his great coat he drew it over the unresisting Damask Girl, and having contrived a support for her back, watched until she was warm and slept.

At daylight the Salvation Train, as it was called on that road, through the frequency of its services, arrived, bringing doctors and food, and the living retired to rest in the fresh cars.

By afternoon all were awake again and revived. The young woman returned Anton's coat, thanking him with courteous warmth, which he acknowledged with a silent bow.

They were now passing through the Indian country, and as the doctors had brought forward intelligence of a desperate uprising, some of the passengers were nervous. At Fort Burial, as the train steamed into the station, a fierce war-whoop rent the air, and a general carnage began. The redskins poured into the car, dealing destruction to the survivors of the wreck.

In traveling through the West Anton was accustomed to wear concealed upon his person two magazine guns of the recent type, each of which contains a great number of cartridges that are discharged successively as long as the finger continues to press. The beauty of the Damask Girl attracted the Indians, and a dozen of the most powerful and rash rushed forward to take possession of her, leaving the others to continue the slaughter. In their eagerness they seemed to overlook Anton, who stood in his seat trembling with anticipation. The young man shot a glance across at the fair young girl: she did not shrink, she half rose defiantly, the hot blood crimsoning her cheeks.

The first brave received a blow from Anton's fist which reeled him onto the seat, and the girl, snatching the weapon from his hand, and pressing it to his temple, held him prostrate. Then Anton's artillery began to sing, and in less time than it can be told half a dozen bucks were

sprawling together dead or dying and the others were retreating in a panic. Following up this advantage, and rallying the express messenger and porter to his aid, the redskins were soon driven from the town.

Anton could not restrain a burst of respectful admiration for the Damask Girl when he returned, perspiring and dusty from his long chase, to the train.

"You behaved magnificently," he declared.

The handsome creature answered: "Each day I think more highly of you; may I not rely on you as a gentleman not to overstep the bounds of civility?"

He colored deeply, and buried himself in Seneca's treatise "On Benefits" till it was dark.

They were pulling up toward the top of the mountain at Four-Fiend Gulch, through which a train seldom passed without being held up and robbed. The conductor had just been through the car, calling, "If you have any valuables, give them to me for safe-keeping," when the well-known click of uncoupling the engine was heard and masked faces peered in at the passengers. Anton, knowing the locality, had lightly swung out of the window while the train still moved at full speed, holding on till it slowed up. Then dropping to the ground, turning his coat inside out and drawing on a mask, he ran forward and joined the robbers, entering the car as if he were one

of them. Three of the desperadoes were deploying in that car.

"Pardners!" he suddenly cried in a startled voice. They all turned, to find themselves facing one of their own number, whose two weapons pointed down their throats.

"Drop your guns," he requested persuasively, and they did so.

"Volunteers here quick to guard these men," he called, and the Damask Girl sprang forward first to receive one of their revolvers.

"Keep them covered," he said, "and don't let them stir."

Anton then ran to join the battle which was being hotly waged outside. In about an hour the engine was brought back, and the train again started on its course, bearing the three prisoners.

"You are the bravest woman I ever saw," puffed Anton, turning his coat back to its proper position and folding away his mask.

"Flattery," she replied, "is never pleasant to hear, and least of all from a total stranger. Please say nothing more. I still think well of you, although you have now for the fourth time ignored my request."

Some of the younger passengers spent much time on the platform, the air being fresher and the scenery more visible from that point. Anton and the Damask Girl had

been seated by each other the whole forenoon without exchanging a word as the train approached a wide river. For a better view Anton pulled up the vestibule platform and opened the outer door. They were moving slowly, and had reached the middle of the bridge when an ominous creaking and grinding sound was heard, and they began to sink.

"The bridge is breaking!" cried Anton; "we must jump," and seizing his neighbor about the waist he sprang clear of the bridge into the boiling flood. They rose, and he struck out powerfully, but at that instant there came a terrible crash, detonation on detonation, as car followed car into the abyss and the two were drawn down the vortex of the sucking water.

Anton was at home in the waves, and battled with exalted might. He knew that the whirlpool must finally spew them up, and they would be saved if he could retain consciousness until they reached the air. It seemed hours! Then, great God, it was the sun once more, and he drew prodigious breaths, reviving. The Damask Girl was limp, she had lost consciousness, and a wild fear seized him. Would she die before he could gain the shore? Placing her head on his shoulder and supporting her with one arm, he struck out to swim with the other. But there had been a heavy storm, and the waters were tumbling

madly ; they were whirled on, ever no nearer the land ; they were lost. In wild despair he kissed her ! It gave him the strength of a giant, and again he fought. She opened her eyes, breathed, moved, her strength returned, her weight lightened. She, too, was swimming. They would be saved.

"It is very kind of you," she said, "but I do not think I need your arm about me now. If I may just touch your shoulder for a moment when I am tired I think that will do."

They reached a farm house, and having dried their clothes returned to the wreck in time to continue their journey on the rescue train. This train had no sleeper, and all their baggage being lost, they sat down together in the seat of a day car. Feeling that he might now reasonably make her acquaintance, he was about to speak when she checked him, saying :

"You have been uncommonly good to me ; will you not continue to be so and leave me to my own thoughts?"

Her look was appealing, and he succumbed to it. Of all the cheerful travelers who had started from the West they were now the only two that remained—she seemed to be thinking of this. The conductor came, and they gave their destinations, for their tickets had gone down with the last Pullman conductor. She was for Boston,

his journey was to end in New York. They were approaching New York; he did not know who she was, and he should never see her again.

On the platform he lingered, expecting her to leave him in silence, and they stood close to one another, he with teeth set. Then mechanically they were slowly walking together and took their way into New York. They purchased some wraps, for which he paid, as they had lost everything and her purse was in the depths of the stream.

"I was never nervous before," she said; "something on this trip has made me so. If you would only accompany me to Boston."

Her friends were there awaiting her, and as she came down the platform with the handsome stranger they wondered.

"We feared you were on that fated train until your telegram came," said a stately middle-aged man after the first greetings, looking inquiringly from her to Anton for an introduction.

"A stranger, Papa, who won my gratitude by not being rude."

The stately gentleman gave the young man a lofty inclination of the head without speaking, which the latter returned with equal dignity.

“Shall we go to lunch somewhere, Papa?” she said, taking the stately gentleman’s arm; “I believe I am hungry.”

Mighty Lionel

Mighty Lionel

IN the waning afternoon across wide fields of snow the sun was setting in a rich mellow sea of light deceptively molten through the dry, keen-edged cold of the air. Its golden rays flooded a little accommodation train toiling smokily up an iron by-trail into the checkerboard of hills and village-manned valleys.

The one non-smoker of this churning train contained, in its collection of human averages, a girl dressed in the fashion of the well-to-do farmers' daughters, though with uncommon taste. The colors blended and stirred an expectation of beauty in the observer, if he happened to note her clothes first. But when he saw her face, if he was not instantly and hopelessly in love with her, it was because he was married. By her upon the seat were some bundles, indicting that her mission to Jamesburgh might have been Christmas shopping.

Across the aisle a smartly polished commercial traveler was betraying his broken heart in desperate launches of flirtation. A more substantial social entity, no less a personage it might be guessed than the scion of one of the

big country estates of the city people, had seated himself directly in front of the rural maiden and hardly removed his eyes from her an instant except to scowl at the drummer for intrusion. Some of the men were contented to gaze at her from behind or slantingly, but as many as could changed their seats forward to command the fair enemy from the front. The car in its masculine gender both advanced and revolved about her, and it happened that there were but two other women travelers to be filled with scandal and scorn that a woman should permit the men to behave so.

The object of this centripetal admiration was not unconscious of the vivid human panorama about her, but, as all judicious girls must be in the midst of strange mankind, appeared with sweet gravity to be celestially unconscious.

One young man who had admitted her to a fleeting glance of condescension and then buried his wits deep in a story magazine, occupied the little notice she could spare for men from the multitudinous torch-flames of the western snowbound heavens.

Let us learn something of this young gentleman, who bore himself with a striking stateliness before which and the artillery of his beauty the citadel of any girl's heart might proudly fall. He was Lionel Montyne, an ideal

youth in every particular, judged by the fair sex of high station and the knowing world high and low. Rich, descending from something or other that would pass in a new world of money, handsome, with a fine air of republican lordliness, and a mind far elevated above slight things and persons, they called him in envying tribute Lofty Lionel.

Even for superlative Lionel this Christmas time was not an unpunctuated period. At the great house to which this trundling train was bearing him he was to meet the beautiful *débutanté* of the year, selected by his admiring friends and the destiny of exalted fitness to be his bride. Though you are mentally and socially a fixed and ultimate star, betrothal is still a perceptible event for you. He was calmly wondering what she would be like, not yet having decided to accept her and being here to inspect her parts. Destiny must take its hat off to him. Could she in some faltering measure appease his infinite ideals? They said he would be proud of her; he could hardly be proud of anything but himself, but she might be worthy of having his priceless pride radiated about her. It seemed the perfection of a perfect world that he, the heir of all the graces and gold of the Montynes, by right of their service to commerce a species of newly dawning royalty, should but need to nod and select from all the

droves of beauties of the nation the one fittest to surrender her rays into his brilliancy.

In his set of the pre-eminent there had been a conscious sifting for his benefit; his intimates were jealous of the fabric of American Life, which would be deranged and its divine equilibrium unsettled, if Lionel Montyne did not marry the most incomparable jewel of the higher world—his matrimony having semblance to the conjugalities of State, a State of which his courtiers were the rich kernel and proper essence.

Edna Merson alone survived the critical fire and received the elective franchises of Lionel's subjects to be his worthy consort, and now his own eyes were to rest upon her and judge at the Leverings' great winter assemblage. If she did not measure up, there were daughters of crowned heads with whom the richest Americans should be intertwining maritally in order to compose the destinies of the earth as they should prevail.

The train came to a convulsive stand, at which Lionel again glanced up, catching the eye of the young scion who was pits beneath him socially, and wafting him a remote nod. He knew Tow Windiker on account of his father's riches, but not in friendship. Money cannot everywhere buy its way to the highest shrines; Windiker's father was merely a big department store keeper.

The door jarred open a space and some one on the platform was heard saying, "We'll be here a long time; it's a fierce wreck."

The men hastened out through the snow to prospect, and by and by returned for warmth, discussing the situation. A freight train had left the track, making a bad mess of it, which would hold them four or five hours for the clearance. What made it worse, the next station was six miles beyond, and the last five behind.

They were deep locked in the fields, even the first cross-road being a mile on. A man and the two women who were to have alighted at the next village and knew the people of the region decided to start forward and borrow a farmer's conveyance for the rest of their journey.

Men came in from the smoker, some of whom were not handsome, nor were they backward in appraising the beauty of the country girl who was now alone among them, or in making up to her with increasing bravery; for the opportunity was a rare one not to be lost, since it doesn't fall to the fortune of a train load of idle men to encounter a delicious young thing alone where the common restraints of society are diluted by a railroad wreck. Their heads were turned by her lovely face, which after all could not have been otherwise unless she had veiled it. They meant to be gentlemanly, each in his way and con-

ception of the rôle, and each had an indignant sense that he was protecting her from the others.

Lionel, silent, frigid and bored, a being by himself in the rich coat that almost brushed the floor, paced the aisle looking askant on this rustic drama, diverting himself with vague efforts to comprehend his fellow creatures in the steerage of life. He supposed this to be the manner of country girls receiving attentions, and that in the direct ratio of the thrusting of compliments was the warmth of their pleasure. Her color was surely commendable, as if she were annoyed; how well she acted her part, keeping them all beyond a line without addressing them, and with a maidenly delicacy! She certainly had her points, and if she had been born in the right sphere would have taken high rank. Of course one couldn't admire rural lustre unpermeated by breeding and refinement, which are the spiritual substance of the finer beauty. An inner eye sees behind the fair porcelain of a mere face. The extraordinary coloring of this countryside damsel belonged to inveterate outdoor exposure, whereas ladies could not be always milking and feeding the pigs for their complexion.

The silken scion was getting fond, as likewise were the blazing drummer and a florid person from the smoker who had been laying up liquid cheer for Christmas in ad-

vance, enough to leer off sugard words dislocatedly. Lionel was displeased and went outside, disdaining longer to witness and suffer from the vulgar comedy. His presence had been a restraint, especially on the scion. There had been an exodus from the car to navigate forward and examine the wreck, which left the persistent three alone with the enchanting innocence; and they were piqued and goaded by her silent iciness to their perfervid pantomimes of the heart. The scion pushed back and sat down by her, determined to make her talk.

She was upon her feet, her cheeks aflame and eyes flashing, commanding him in a low, quivering voice to leave the seat.

"You must kiss me first," said the audacious Windiker, and he would have thrown his arm about her, when the car door opened. The young man who entered and paused to survey the scene wore an indeterminate costume, which gave an easy freedom to his supple form. He could hardly be placed, and after a studied view would be described as powerful, dynamic and indefinable.

Although he stood there merely looking down the car, he extended a remarkable influence to the group in its centre. The girl sank back with a surprised radiancy in her eyes, which she kept upon him; the rich and burly scion bristled anger and menace upon the intruder until

his vision cleared, when, muttering something apologetic, he lumbered up and ungraciously retreated through the rear door; the salesman and the permature inebriate were moved to bluster, but when the youth advanced down the car they backed off and hustled away. This indefinable arrival was a stranger to all of the four.

The girl was trying vainly to stifle sobs that would come for no reason in the world when he reached her seat. The young man ignored what had happened and sat down by her as if they were old friends.

He told her they would have to lie there far into the night, a very cheerless prospect, that they would go together and find a team, and that he would set her down at home, if it was not too distant.

"I was walking through from Jamesburgh when I heard of the accident, and came down for a look at it," he explained, "and that is how I happened in."

The girl replied that her nearest friends were at Denmore, ten miles off, and that she could not take him so far out of his way.

He lightly brushed her hesitancy aside, gathering her things.

"I have no urgent destination," he laughed; "in fact, I was going to spend the night in the next village if they have an inn, and a sleigh ride and a farmer's bed are much better."

While speaking he was leading the way.

"We shall have some high wading," he said, looking into her brilliant eyes inquiringly.

They had to circle the wreck by crossing a big ditch into the field and returning to the track farther on. First they threaded their way through the crowd of passengers who were shivering in front of the locomotive and scanning the hills of debris dolefully. One incased in fur from head to foot gave a low exhalation of interest far in the furry recesses as they passed. Montyne recognized the man, and treated himself to an ironical smile.

"Ever the same Thurston Egerly! Any girl is a romance to him. I suppose he was billeted for Levering's, but now he sees a pretty milkmaid and rescues her from the iridescent admiration of this menagerie. She'll hardly thank him, I fancy; the harpies were her festival. What a gay catastrophe it would be if this slip of the soil should ensnare his heart!"

Lionel laughed melodiously at these happy reflections, thinking how he would serve up Egerly scalloped on a story with the brass drummer, Duncie Windiker, and the drunkard, like a turkey with its embellishments on a platter. Thurston brushed by the tall, sable-clad form without recognition.

They wended on by the lights of the wreckers, Egerly

ploughing a path; the snow was at his knees, and a few more steps brought the drift to his waist. He faced about comically:

"There are pretty big lengths of this ahead; you'll be wet through by wading and couldn't ride in such a plight. There's no way but for me to carry you."

There was no other way, for passages of the ensuing mounds would have been impossible for one impeded with woman's clothing. He lifted her, and she put an arm about his neck to lighten him, and thus he broke through the billowed snow battlements to the track.

The second farm house on the road promised well, and they went in.

"I have a team I wouldn't let many take," balanced the owner, surveying Thurston critically, "but I guess you're up to 'em."

While they dried the adhering snow their host and his man hooked in the horses, whose bells soon trilled musically at the door, and then the kind people brought out their big coon-skin coats, without which no one thought of sleighing in that country.

"I'll be back to-night," said the young man, "and may I trespass on your goodness for a bed?"

They cordially urged him to stay with them, disclaiming any virtue for sitting up late, for train wrecks were like fires, and everybody ought to help who could.

So they were off, muffled warmly and packed beneath the robes.

Lionel was right in calling Thurston Egerly romantic, and this was as far as his comprehension of Egerly went. Then, like a swift and beautifully organized racer, Thurston's nature left Lionel's behind and they were no longer creatures of the same sphere. The value of love is gauged by the quality of the lover, so that there are as many different species of love as there are people. The worth of some love can be measured by clay or gold, but there is a kind which has no analogy in any material substance for measurement.

Thurston loved this slim, unsullied child of wood and field; already he loved her with passionate, tameless strength, so had life performed its miracles in this little space. And curious, was it not? Now that he loved, the winning of her seemed mountainous, stupendous, and out of his reach. There was a power in her nature which he could feel through the young sweet innocence that had accepted his help so trustingly, a something convincing him that if he should breathe of love it would send her from him wounded and resentful forever and ever.

How could a young man be gay with the great human in him uttering its wild cry and he superhumanly suppressing it, despairing lest the object of its call should

be affrighted and lost? And yet Thurston Egerly, upon the surface, was like ice under the calm moon, with its millions of crystals sparkling and shimmering over a boiling river, as though he were a self-contained soul not of this lovelorn earth, at peace.

It is strange that he did not deceive the girl. Close to him, cutting through the crisp starlit night, her face shone with something so indescribable that whenever Thurston turned to look at her he must instantly bend his head away, struck through with a delirium of abandoned hopelessness. He talked on, witty and delightful, and through it all he was only saying, "I love you, I love you, I love you!" And she understood, and sang back to him in the sweetest music, "I love you, I love you!" But he did not understand, because it seemed impossible and too much, and his heart was burning and sore.

So on and on, with the space shortening and the brink of heaven over which he was to step for an infinite fall nearing.

What a coward he was! The best he could do was to ask in unskilful words if he might come back to call, to which she demurely answered that this was not her home, that she was living in Westbridge, where he might find her in a few days—at Horace Lane's; but the place was far from anywhere, and his kindness had already been

great—greater than she could thank him for—and he ought not to trouble further.

Which the poor fool received in bitterness and confirmation of the formula he had written within him that love was far from her fancy and he but the light episode of a flitting hour of her life.

He wanted a thousand assurances and would have believed in none less; but when they parted she only permitted him to hold her hand until he was ashamed to do so longer, and to give it a little pressure, which she returned with no more than he gave, and these sometime tokens from the heart he interpreted as only her sweet spontaneous girlish gratitude and friendliness. She even forgot to ask his name nor would he thrust it upon her, and he went away with Miss Lane in his heart and the whole world for him in Miss Lane and the universe in mourning for his defeat.

Lionel served up his story at the Leverings' with the taste and excellence of a consummate social *chef*. The pretty rustic had intrenched herself against the whole car generalled by Duncie and the salesman, but when Egerly sounded his horn she had flown the white flag, opened the gates and been carried away by the conqueror. He hadn't needed to strike a blow and it was now a safe guess that they were affianced lovers. If Egerly condescended to

appear among his friends he would come only to proclaim his agricultural triumph and announce the size of her father's mortgage.

The young women of the party did not relish this banter of Lionel's, Thurston Egerly being their favorite, and his angelic eccentricities, not supposed to be comprehensible, were fascinating features of his magnetism.

If Thurston had lost his heart in good earnest to the dairy-maid, his friends were hurt and his foes happy, for that would cede Miss Merson to the decadent Montyne, for whom these friends said she was too good. Her alliance with such mental antiquity would be a crime. The Thurstonites had also built high on the confidence that if Egerly and Edna met the stars would scheme their love and give Lionel a sharp rebuke.

Eagerness to know the climax of the railroad adventure was keen when Thurston arrived on the day succeeding the accident. He came only to say that he couldn't remain, and found his story there in advance. One of his friends sketched the Montyne program.

"You must rescue her," he said, "for her sake and ours. We must save her from mediaeval Montyne."

"You'll have to do it, Hal, for I'm not a candidate."

"I would like to, but it's no use; they've done good mining to explode her into Lionel's net, and no one can halt the fate but you."

"Then I fear it can't be done," said Thurston. "I'm sorry. I'd like to help."

"You will meet her, at least, and there's hope."

"But don't you see, Hal, if she could have a thought of Montyne I couldn't have one of her? It's the very test I should like to put a girl to if I were free."

The intrigue in his present frame of mind offended him, and they could hardly extort a promise to return to the Leverings' that evening.

Yet Lionel himself felt some trepidation as night approached, bringing on the hour of Edna's coming.

He imagined he knew that nothing makes a man so enchanting to a capricious girl as his being over ears and eyes in love with another pretty girl, though this is not so. He therefore wished there had been a parson on the train to marry Thurston to the slim farmer before he could escape, while his heart was at love heat, ere he could return to the resoratives of society and intelligence. Perhaps there had been a parson or two among the hovering love-makers—who knows?

Edna came and was waylaid by Lionel and his satellites. The history of Egerly's lacerated emotions was reproduced, making her curious to see the romantic hero of something real in love. She was assured that the

Knight of the Sod was presentable in his normal state, though too eccentric for life out of an airship.

The circumstances were strenuous for Lionel, he was not at all competent to nod and elect Miss Merson as he had pre-vised the doing, nor to reject her, nor even to be rejected without an internal tempest, for she dissipated his loftiness by her witchery and made him humble and beseeching. In fact, he was dreadfully in love with her immediately, losing his majestical equilibrium, and then was mighty Lionel no longer, but fell into a bog of misery as deep as Thurston's.

Weaver secured a momentary word with Edna. They knew each other well, and he talked to her in suffering wrath, for now Lionel was besieging her fervently. Hal foolishly spoke of Egerly, and gave his case away.

"Wait till you see Thurston," he pleaded, "before you squander yourself there"—indicating Lionel with a motion of the eye.

She threw her head high with graceful scorn.

"Do you think, Hal, I'd take away another girl's lover if I could?"

This was such an unexpected shot, the tone wounding more than the words, that Hal looked into her eyes with frank mystification. Was she angry? or jealous? was she going to throw herself into Last Century's arms,

Middle Ages Monty's, because she wanted to show that she wouldn't have had Thurston if he wanted her? It didn't show it, and did betray pique that Thurston had not given her a chance to be had by him.

"We'll help him out of that," Hal insisted; "when he sees you he'll forget his little haymaker, and we'll hope she'll forget him in a week."

"He shall marry her, if he wants to," she said, scorching Hal with her dazzling eyes, now glowing with determined purpose. "He made love to her, I'm sure he did; you"—there was a withering emphasis on the you—"would have him break her heart, and it would break it—I'll be her friend."

Hal lifted his eyes in ludicrous despair.

"I give you up—you, who are the fittest for each other in this giddy generation; go your ways, marry your merry misfits, meet afterwards, repent always, and think of me who would like to marry you myself—there's my declaration of love, which I intended to suppress. If you won't have Thurston, in heaven's name take me, and not an animated fossil."

"Traitor," she laughed. "When there is a drought of offers I'll think of yours." As he turned to leave her she added, "Every silly has his day Hal, and this was yours."

Thurston was very late in returning to the Leverings' that night. When he came into the company and he and Edna were face to face, it dawned upon Lionel Montyne last of all that Edna Merson was the slim farmer.

When they assailed her for an explanation of her railway masquerade, as they called it, she said:

"You know I came up here every summer when I was little and have the dearest friends among the country people, and I love to go about as I used to."

But they did not get the deeper explanation. Did Lionel guess it?

Changing the Climate of Tulip Valley

Changing the Climate of Tulip Valley

BEING a friend of Dr. Adam Merrill, I had privileges that were accorded to few. He stood between the contending factions with Christian sympathy for reaction and progress both, and was made chairman of their meetings, which he administered sagely with a very handsome impartiality, just as he doctored. For he had no prejudices against either diseases or persons, he found good in them all.

I was what they called a tourist, and was therefore supposed to be a dreamy epicure weakly addicted to wild flowers and golf, and I had not been long enough in Tulip Valley to betray mind also, having only arrived the day before the meeting.

Tulip Valley was a very renowned place, and it was no shame for anyone to be there if he could get there, and it greatly enhanced his luster if he succeeded in getting out, through the roads,

Flowers, climate, beauty, and singularity of the human species inhabiting, were the features on which the Valley's distinction flourished. The tulip especially thrived,

having robbed the prism of its colors and semi-tones for its own use, blooming the year round and paying no attention to the seasons except to shift its hues on their march. In mid-summer the valley looked like a great red carpet, in fall the carpet turned sky blue, in winter it was a brilliant green, and in the spring a dazzling yellow, shading off into other varieties between times. Most curiously it was oblivious to the dry season and when all other vegetation died attained its most glorious blush, like the ever verdant live-oak.

The climate was salubrious from November until June, but between these dates reversed, the pathetic summer period, it was seethingly florid.

The beauty was neither grotesque nor frightful, rather that safe, sedate mountainousness, promissory of excluded winds and merely temperate floods. When James Turnville, the eastern railway president, lost his life going to the station fifteen miles off during the moist season it was his own foolhardiness; a man who drives a team with a delicate carriage into a boiling torrent interspersed with ballet-dancing rocks has an evident penchant for misplaced enterprise and eternity.

We come now to the people, the race of mankind situated within the boundaries of the Tulip mountains. His-

torical zoologists had classified them as first settlers, second settlers, and unsettlors. The first settlers had arrived in time to obtain all the Tulip Valley land from the Mexicans for a song and to raise its price higher than the adjacent peaks; the second settlers were those who had alighted later and accommodatingly bought land of the pioneers at their celestial figures. They were mostly from new and old England, of guileless and aspiring temperament, void of suspicious susceptibility to Californian creeds and codes. They had plunged their inheritances into land at the vaulting prices without forethought, expecting to repose on their verandas and recruit from reposing in Europe, while collecting thirty per cent. income from their vicarious fruit orchards, and they had since been eating the rolled oats and corn-meal of remorse without indulging in travel or the national institution of Sunday rest. They were fast anchored to the Tulip temperature by land poverty. And they had become a stern, unyielding set, taciturn, morose and mosaic, awaiting the Judgment Day, determined to die defiantly in their want before sacrificing on their investments by abating, in the sale of their farms, a jot or tittle from the glorious fortunes they paid for them in the days of their halcyon folly.

Strangely different was their drawn, wolfish aspect from the rubicund mellowness of the first comers who had secured their money and were now living commodiously in sanctified gratitude to Providence on its profits.

The unsettlors were the very last batch of Easterners, who had immigrated with their eye-teeth already smartly cut, so to speak, and who were now mere ruminating residents without being land owners; but they were less debased than the vagrant tourists, because they manifested the ethical instinct of desire to invest. In fact, they craved land and even clamored for it, offering prices; but the trouble was they did not offer the heaven-hailing sums to which the Tulip earth had soared in its first ascension. They had arrived in the climate after what the orator of the upheavers, a venomous pessimist, called 'the grand disillusionment,' referring to the gloomy awakening of the East to its dark fate of gracefully paying nine or ten times the producing value of a California acre on the strength of the scarcity of snow.

The unsettlors contended that if they bought fruit-bearing land they ought to be able to make a living on it, to which the previous inhabitants shrewdly replied that this would be paying nothing for warm weather.

"But we can't live on climate."

"You can't live here without buying it."

And there the two parties hitched and pulled in opposite directions, and stood indignantly still. The country also stood still, for no enterprising person could get a piece of it without relinquishing both his wealth and his self-respect.

All the land was thus held with an eye, or rather a telescope, to the future, the original owners clinging to their fabulous estimates in the pious and wrathful hope of a just recompense through fleecing somebody as they had been shorn.

The Tulip country was in this turbid condition when I attended the public meeting. The unsettlors, radicals or upheavers, as they were variously stigmatized, who were mainly climate seekers, were moving to place Tulip Valley on a basis of progress in order to acquire certain of the pleasures and conveniences ordinarily denied to Californians by their all-compensating admiration for unimproved sunshine. They wanted these comforts, even if they were refused the privilege of abiding homes.

The valley, which was situated fifteen miles from the Pacific Ocean, ran in a parallel line with the shore of that cooling reservoir, and was a singularly protected enclosure, fenced in on its four sides by four mountain walls, so neatly arranged by the early procession of the volcanoes that the direct winds from the sea were rigorously

warded off, assuring that incomparably delicious mildness on winter days which the land-owners associated with paradise to the latter's disparagement.

At the Valley's lower extension issued a passage, whence with innumerable sharp windings, ascents and declivities, the only road coiled its way down to the sea at Saint Yukon, the most evenly clement summer village on the California coast, and which hung suspended over the water upon the railroad like a beautiful pearl pendant. Down this ravine meandered also a thread of water, helplessly feeble in the months of heat, but in the rainy time a ravening torrent, crossing the road at some twenty points between the valley and its terminus in the sea.

These interruptions and the jolting rocks of the road-bed exacted of traveling humanity an expenditure of strength so wearying as to lock the residents of the Tulip region at home on the sizzling days when they most needed to be gently driving on the cooling beach.

Now it was conceded that it would be a precious luxury and save many lives if they could secure the invigorating ocean ozone more liberally, and it was upon this problem that the meeting had been called to sit.

The first to address it was a clear and businesslike speaker from the progressive side, barring the difficulty he had in making his voice heard. His name was Bar-

celon Gelly, who owned stock in twenty-five metropolitan daily papers, although he never had strength to read any of them and was confined for life to the Tulip climate by an asthma which he had contracted in breathing animation into one of these giant organs of common sense. He was, in fact, an extremely level-headed man, being compelled by his disease to lie on his back most of the time, and was considered to be in close touch with the interior of human things from his connection with the world's freshest events through his property, though obliged to forego a knowledge of them, as all were aware. He was, therefore, put forward by the iconoclast wing to manifest their feelings.

He contended that the right way was to bring the ocean to their doors by smoothing the road to Saint Yukon and bridging the elbows of the creek. The drive through this picturesque woodland was superb if one's marrow were not being racked into convulsions by rocks. All of the progressives heartily applauded these sentiments, and called for a vote.

Silas Lagram, however, conservative, who owned a thousand acres of land and two hundred thousand dollars in coin, which he had earned by selling some other tracts to his unsophisticated countrymen, proceeded to his feet.

Said he, "I agree with the speaker that we ought to be

enjoying the benefits of the ocean more than as if we lived back in Arizonia, but it don't satisfy my notion of economical energy if we've got to ride away down there seawards every time we get 'em. We ought to find a way to bring the ocean up here, as it were. Some's obliged to stay at home on the hot days to milk, and they'd like to enjoy the coolin' comforts of nature as well as them who can convey themselves about. I haven't a plan just now for bringin' the ocean around, but we ought to set our minds to it."

Judge Hidslup, formerly of the Superior Court, now rose deliberately upon his cane and took off his hat. He was a citizen of such respectability that Tulip public opinion allowed him to keep it on when he preferred. His manner of talking was peculiar and influential, and I shortly observed that its eloquent impressiveness consisted of a frequent absolute pause or period where, in the diction of ordinary men, there would have been none.

He first remarked that he had something to say. Which he hoped would be listened to with attention. By the younger men, if not in years at least in real estate. Who occupied what he hoped he might without irreverence to the British Parliament. Facetiously call the opposition benches. He had a plan which he hoped. Would solve and satisfy everything and everybody. His way would

be to cut down all the trees in the gap. Between Tulip and Saint Yukon. This would let the ocean wind sweep up the passage, which was now obstructed by the trees. It would pour over gratefully into the Tulip Valley and cool it all. Which he thought was feasible, as he owned nearly all the land. That the trees stood on.

A terrible shudder at this point ran through the opposition benches. The project meant nothing less than the erasure of one of the finest natural parks in the State of California, a thing of inestimable worth and beauty, if not to the natives at least to the inflooding nature lovers.

The shudder was lost on the Judge, who continued his remarks by saying that the price of stove-wood was going up, and that if it rose high enough he should be willing to relieve the Valley of its summer heat by supplying it with winter heat. He said he had been investigating the matter in order to make a report to the meeting, by climbing a tree in the ravine clear to the top, and had found the wind blowing beautiful and cool up there, while down on the ground a person would sweat. The trees held it back and gave it time to heat before it got to Tulip.

The Hon. Ponchas Leverbone, a forty-niner, who had served a term in the State Assembly and another in the State Prison, seconded these sentiments, but would go a step further and cut down all the trees in the Tulip

Valley to give the new-comers a better view of the scenery and the land market; but as he was going on to expatiate, Dr. Adam Merrill interposed, with the authority of the Chair, to remind him that this was irrelevant to the occasion, though another meeting might be convened to consider the topic.

The Hon. Ponchas appealed from the Chair that if Judge Hidslop's principle was right every tree left standing in the Tulip domain would impede the suction and circulation of the cool temperature from the canyon, and would hold it still while it warmed up—and the meeting sustained him, throwing the innovators into extreme despair as they pictured the entire valley nude and bald.

Deacon Hillery Dimpole, the general storekeeper of Tulip with the exception of drugs, next seized the floor. He was fluent in discourse from extensive practice at church meetings; the ripe, mellow tones of his athletic voice seemed to banish evil and strife from the vicinity, though the words taken apart from the tones somewhat rasped.

"I don't mind confiding to dear neighbors," he began, "that I'm a leetle more pronounced than the brothers that have sat down. Although richly recognizing the responsibility of intercommunication, there are occasions when I am opposed to a good road on religious principles, of

which this is one. It would entice the salo-o-on element into our midst and we should see empty bottles by the road; it would thin our tourists and slack our trade, for while you might say they could get in here easier it's ekally sure they could get out easier, and that's what some of 'em want to do and what we've partiklarly to guard against. Keep what you have and don't go a-sprouting in the dark after more is an established principle of Tulip success. Shall we make roads with our own hands, so to speak, to accommodate travelers to imbibe our good air by night—and shop in Saint Yukon by day? What's the sense of tourists if we can't have their business? If they want a better road, perhaps we can let 'em build it. To him that hath, etc., is holy writ, and we, having the blessed atmosphere, it's right to us shall be given the trade of the sick. And I'm not in favor of Judge Hidslop's cutting down his woods likewise—it would allure the drinkers this way and the tourists the other."

Couldn't we pump the ocean air over the mountain, asked one, and when the pumps are not conveying the climate use them to pump over the ocean water for sea bathing?

Marcus Julius Smith, who was considered a practical genius on account of the number of mortgages that he held and who seldom wasted his pearls on the early part of a meeting, was now urgently called for.

"I like the ideas of friend Lagram," he said, "only I could wish there had been more of them, as I suppose he does. It's plain we could double if not threbbble the value of land here if we was to find out a way to modify the atmosphere as we pleased to. There's the ocean and here's Tulip Valley, one's cool while the other's hot and needing it, and the only thing that stands in the way is that pesky mountain ridge between. Now it does seem, though I ain't a reg'lar engineer, that we might diskuver a transaction for unifying the two, and my idea is to cut a pass through the mountain, which ain't above three thousand feet high, and that would let the cool air blow direct in here all summer, and we shouldn't need to go out of Tulip Valley at all to get it. In respect to Deacon Dimpole's objection, we could leave it rough and stony at the bottom so people couldn't drive through."

One of the radicals was on his feet as soon as Marcus Julius sat.

"That's all very well," he shouted excitedly, "and I might support it if it didn't menace the very supremacy of the Tulip climate as a winter haven. If you cut open that gap three thousand feet deep and let the cool air in on us in summer, it will be there when winter comes, and the raw winter winds will rush through and destroy the salubrious healthy beneficence which nature has granted

us by creating the guardian Brimstone range. Why, the very name of the mountain protests against such unnatural ingratitude! It was christened Brimstone because by precluding the ingress of the raucous ocean breath it engendered the ardent temperature of the Tulip retreat. Its predestined duty ought not to be interfered with by man. If the value of land here should rise threefold in the summer it would sink thirtyfold in the winter. I tell you it would be a bad move, not because land isn't thirty times too high but because we ought not to ruin one of nature's few climatic successes."

Elijah Trample, lukewarm in his advocacy of either progress or decay but much esteemed for having lived twenty-five years with a quarter of one lung and thus done more for the Tulip climate than twelve or fifteen well men, took up the chain of thought argumentatively:

"I believe a tunnel would be superior to a gap. It would let less cold through in winter, and in summer the sea air would be kept cool while proceeding along it. If we dig a gap we'll spoil a number of farms on top of the mountain, which'll have to be paid for, and it ain't improbable that in going down we should cut into several great arteries of oil and lay them open to pour their distressing contents down into the Tulip orchards to abolish vegetation."

The tunnel plan was rejected on the ground that it would be an irresistible instigation to some company to build a railroad through.

They also repudiated the remedy of cutting off the trees in the Tulip River Canyon because of its windings and pockets, where the wind would catch, as well as because the canyon opened into the Valley way down at a corner, far from the middle, from which all sections would be unequally revived, so that the operation would be unfair to some parts.

Prof. Flinders Duck, Principal of the Tulip Valley Academy and a geologist of some note in Tulip, assured them there would be no geologic objection to the gap.

Deacon Hillery had sat in severe meditation during these variegated remarks, and he now got on his feet a second time, speaking with two fingers of one hand lying stiff and parallel in the palm of the other.

"I can't see that the point about spiling the winter should stand in the way of a pious project; the gap proposition is most appealin' and shouldn't be allowed to fall through for want of intellect. We can put big gates into the opening, reaching all the way to the summit, like canal locks, and when we want to have it cool here we can open 'em and let the ocean breeze up, and when we want it warm we can shut them and keep the ocean wind out.

We'll need to make the gates kind of V-shaped, because the gap will have to be wider at the top than the bottom to keep it from caving.

"I shouldn't wonder if we could get any kind of climate we wanted, for we shan't have to open the gates all the way when the heat don't warrant; we can just open them a crack or two and let an adjustable moderation in. If we can get the climate changed here it'll be a great precedent. Every town with a mountain near it can cut a pass through and alter its climate to anything it likes. And perhaps before long there'll be an invention for making mountains so that every town can have a gap."

Silas Lagram intimated that they could sell the precedent.

It was strange how this idea took possession of the minds of both the first and the second settlers. When the question was put they voted for it unanimously and carried the motion, being the majority, and they agreed to take hold of the work with their own scrapers and teams.

I intend to visit Tulip Valley again next year to see what progress they have made.

Urgent

A TALL, handsome, actively built young fellow leaped from his horse, and, taking some letters from his pocket, walked softly into the tent. It was dusk, and he had ridden hard all day to the mailing station and back. "Here are three for you, Stanley," he said in a low tone, "and Clarence gets only one this trip. How is the poor fellow?" The speaker leaned over the rough couch where Clarence Hallowell with bandaged head lay in a heavy sleep.

"Better," answered the other; "he slept nearly all day and the fever is abating, but he'll have to lie perfectly quiet for several days before the danger line is fully passed. It was a hard fall, and only the brush saved him."

Bernard Grandon, the tall youth, studied the inscription of his disabled friend's letter dubiously. "It's marked 'urgent,'" said he; "perhaps Hallowell ought to know its contents."

"You wouldn't kill him, would you!" exclaimed Stanley Barker in an explosive whisper; "excitement would be his death, even an embryo healer can diagnose that."

"Well, Doctor," retorted Grandon indulgently, "then we must take the responsibility of finding what the urgency of the letter is, and I empower you to open it. Something may need to be done, and we must see to it, if we can, for old Hallowell, since he's in limbo."

While Stanley read the epistle the youthful patient on the bed turned unconsciously and groaned. His finely moulded features strikingly resembled those of his athletic friend; indeed, strangers pronounced them twins, and when separated only familiar acquaintances could distinguish them. They had been companions for a year, having met by accident and joined fortunes in this mining expedition.

They were now the fastest friends, and far and wide were known as the Arctic Twins. Over the great northern peninsula they were famous for their high and daring qualities, as well as for their devotion to fairness and their geniality to all. Many had been saved from border injustice and savagery when it was known that these two fearless and far-loved youths had espoused their cause.

It was the humor of the region to consider them as one person without a double identity; they were called Bernard and Clarence indiscriminately—always affectionately by the first name—and a conversation begun with one was afterward resumed with the other quite as if it made

no difference: which was exceedingly interesting to the two young fellows, who immersed themselves in the situation with comical zest, ever having something unexpected and half magical to relate in the deep winter evenings, caused by their interchangeable personalities.

These three attractive men were of the age when life is still unmarred by the cares of either having or wanting gold. They had made this excursion in search of life and experience; yet Fortune, piqued by their indifference, had smiled upon and coquetted with them, and had ended by making them rich.

Barker handed the open letter to Grandon:

“— FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, July 15, 1903.

“DEAREST CLARENCE:

“Uncle George says it is my duty to marry Rudolph Grane. It has been a long nightmare, already six months of torture and resistance. I would sooner die a hundred times than marry that marmalade gallant once. But the dreadful catastrophe is appointed for September fifteenth, a respite of only two months in my once happy Eden before the snake is to dine on me. Eve had an option:—the serpent has, it seems, upon me. You, love, alone can deliver me. I can’t refuse uncle’s request and continue to live if you are not here. It would seem a cruel caprice, for he thinks his honor already terribly involved and that

worse things are gathering. He'll never believe in my affection if I shatter his good name and fortune by refusing this man, who, I'm sure, is a traitor. I can only prove my horror of the reptile—in whom uncle implicitly believes—by acting; it is my only escape, and if you fail me I must take my life. If you are not here I shall kill myself at eight o'clock on the wedding night.

“Your fondest

“ETHELYN.”

“By the Aurora, could anything be worse?” demanded Grandon, much moved. “The affair can't wait! Surely he mustn't lose the girl just through this little accident. When he learns her fate it may cause a relapse and kill him. He should start to-morrow to get there in time.”

“Start!” echoed Barker, who already had the doctors' elastic perceptions; “command your senses, Barney. If he goes it kills him, he therefore doesn't arrive, and she kills herself: then both are dead, two lives lost! whereas if we say nothing he lives and she is the only dead one; he comes to and loses his mind, but we have saved his life. A man without a mind is far better than a mind without a man. Go eat your supper and seal up the letter. This is a case for medical ethics.”

Grandon did not hear this remedial philosophy. He was thinking that it must not happen. “I'm enough like

Clarence to pass for him with his own bride, and they'll lay all changes to a year in the Klondyke cold—perhaps think him improved. I believe I can save Ethelyn's life for her lover."

"Barker," said he, earnestly, "when Clarence comes around tell him I've gone up the country to our other claims. Keep back the letter till he's well, then let him know I'm in New York to protect Ethelyn, and send him on after me. I'll checkmate that beggar Grane."

Barker thought well of this project and the next morning Bernard Grandon started for New York.

It was a turtle's progress for a man on a life and death mission, but on the fifteenth his train pulled into the city, having recovered two hours of lost time; and as soon as speed would allow, the elated Grandon rang the bell at Ethelyn's home. He waited tremulously, his heart almost as palpitant as if his own fate were suspended. The girl who glided into the dim drawing-room excelled the glowing picture he had fancifully formed of her in the weighted hours of his flying journey. She threw her arms about his neck, and kissed him many times.

"Dear Clarence!" she cried, ecstatically. "I knew you would come! You have saved my life!"

"How could I help it?" he answered, choking.

Of course the situation was embarrassing, but it was

his duty to submit to it, and he did so manfully. The plan required him to personate Clarence in every particular, even in extremes; for if he were cold she might suspect, and kill herself in chagrin or despair. He returned her caresses with an outward ardor and inward chill, as far as possible, striving to remember his friend and play his part creditably. And after the first scene of the first act he had a fine conviction that he was playing his part as it ought to be done. He found, indeed, that he was not obliged to force himself, that his rôle went naturally, and the girl responded, giving him her love intensely and lavishly.

They sat together in happiness, he forgetting everything but Clarence and she everything but him, and time passed; words were unnecessary, so they were left unspoken; and as he felt that Clarence himself could not have done the thing better than he was doing it, his bliss was supreme.

They might have remained thus for many hours, but the thought of why he was there came suddenly and smote Bernard. Hardly audibly, that she might not suspect his voice, he said:

“Dearest Ethelyn, is the ceremony to-night?”

She came back to common life with a shudder, but was immediately alert and firm. “Uncle and Grane are to have

another of their endless scenes over me—burial services, I call them—you must hear it, Uncle George would call you in if he knew of your presence.”

She lingered fondly, and then led him into her relative's private room, where she had arranged a concealment.

Even at the eleventh hour her uncle and guardian was again wavering, and Grane, a man of magnetism, addressed himself to restoring strength to the vacillating mind.

“It will be hard on Clarence if we fail, my dear Runyon,” he said sonorously; “the boy's whole fortune goes, you know. Ethelyn, Clarence and yourself will be plunged into hopeless poverty. You may endure it, but the young haven't your philosophy. Ethelyn was reared in splendor and wealth—why, Runyon, she'll actually have to work for a living, at typewriting or something; think of it! Ethelyn Runyon, a leading beauty and aristocrat, working for a living! And Clarence, poor dog, what can he do? You know he has neither business capacity nor training, only the idle life of a student behind him; it's hard to beggar a helpless fellow like that when he trusted you with his money. You are too generous to think of yourself, and as your junior partner I have the right of affection to do so. Consider the steepening lad-

der of life, the fruitless struggle to regain lost standing, old age, decrepitude, remorse! I tell you, you don't know what you're doing!—do you suppose you can be happy with Ethelyn wearing out under your eyes?"

Runyon groaned.

"What are you thinking of, my dear friend," continued Grane, more eagerly, "when one word from you will repair all? We don't know why the girl's maternal grandfather made such a ridiculous will, but he did, and if Ethelyn's not married this evening, on her eighteenth birthday, the magnificent legacy is lost to her and passes from your branch of the family. Now, I love her, and our alliance will scatter the clouds. Wouldn't it be a crime to drag your dear ones down to desolation by a moment of misplaced weakness? Surely you'll insist on her obedience."

"Grane," answered the older man, his impressive countenance deeply furrowed with pain, "this is a terrible crisis for me; our business ought not to be where it is; I left too much in your hands."

He paused sadly, looking out at the mild-shining September sun. Grandon could see Rudolph Grane's visage, and as Runyon spoke a devilish look of triumphant contempt, not free from something more sinister, glowed a second there and went out in deferential concern as Runyon turned and resumed:

"I was to blame; that foreign branch of our house, of which you said the profits were so sure—how it has drained us! I should have given an older man's no to your expansive proposition, it was the first time I ever was indulgent in business affairs and it was fatal. But if we break—ah, it would kill me, I'm afraid—yes, I'll appeal to Ethelyn once more, for the honor of my name and yours. I don't censure you, Rudolph; those dubious transactions in my absence and without my knowledge were but the effervescence of your youthful commercial zeal and not moral laxness. I covered them with the probity of my established name and assumed full responsibility, proving my love for you—you can never doubt my love, Grane, after what I did—but if we don't pay dollar for dollar all that goes for naught, we're both ruined, and I stand before the world a criminal, branded for what I didn't do."

The evil look revealing the malignancy of Rudolph Grane's interior once more flashed and faded.

"He's a devil," said Grandon, as the partners passed arm in arm from the room. "He has brought the firm to ruin to force Runyon to give him his niece and her fortune, and he has drawn off the firm's money for himself."

The youth could hardly keep from rushing after Grane and choking a confession out of him; but there was more to learn, and he postponed the pleasure.

Runyon ascended with weary step to his niece's apartment. A strong feeling as of father and child existed between them, her parents being long since dead and he unmarried. He feared to find her depressed, for earlier in the day he had disclosed the full gravity of his position, only withholding Grane's agency; but she was gayer than she had been for months, which cheered him, as he read in it a decision to adopt his advice to love and marry Grane.

"I will take you out of pawn to-night," she laughingly said, so he went away renewed to congratulate Grane.

It was the last hour of afternoon. In the window looking out upon the coloring sunset sky Ethelyn stood with her hands tightly clasped behind her and a strange softness in her eyes. The radiance of love was in them and her form thrilled. "It is not Clarence, it is not Clarence," she breathed. What had brought this splendid stranger just in time, and why had the other remained away? And the mystery of their resemblance! She had kissed him! and her cheeks glowed a dark crimson as she thought of it. Yet in her face there was no regret, the glow was of deep happiness.

During dinner Ethelyn's maid conducted Grandon to a place in the centre of the house, where hidden in a forest of plants refreshments awaited him. "It is a shame

for Mr. Clarence not to have more than this," the young woman said, sweetly smiling, and Grandon couldn't decide the meaning of her smile.

The marriage guests were few. Though Grane desired a grand wedding, with a flourish in the newspapers, since the ceremony had not been certainly scheduled in all hearts concerned to come off until that very day, he was perforce contented with an occasion most select and private. The officiating clergyman was a rather young man and former acquaintance of Clarence's, who kept rigidly within himself, answering Grane's loquacity with words of hardly one syllable. Grane sorely afflicted his sensibilities.

The hour came and they awaited the bride, Grane beaming with victory. Five minutes lengthened into twenty, and Grane's brow grew ever blacker: if she tricked him he had George Runyon where he would grind him to atoms. Then she tripped lightly down the wide stairs unattended.

"I have decided not to marry," she said steadily, smiling.

The blood left Runyon's cheek. A muffled, raputurous explosion shook within the clergyman; Grane, purple black, moved to a window looking out on the street and raising it as if for air to sustain him, waved his hand

slightly. Almost immediately a message was brought to Runyon, which he read with a terrible pallor.

"I am ruined," he said; "we have lost all, but that is light. I thought our creditors fully covered, but here's word of another miscarriage, and little is left for them. I'm notified of criminal charges."

He stiffened himself with strong effort and added:

"Grane, the worst falls on me alone; you are bankrupt with me, but my assumption of your acts saves you from the criminal docket and makes me a felon."

Grane forced an aspect of woe, and laying a hand on his senior's shoulder urged in round tones, "Bear up, Runyon; if you go to prison I'll pay your debts, I pledge my life to it, you shall find me steadfast. Think of years behind the bars, Ethelyn! the cruelty of it! I beg you to relent."

"I can save you all," convulsively broke from the clergyman. "Er, I'm willing to marry Miss Runyon, should be glad to, in fact, to, to save her esteemed uncle from infamy, and, and, confer a great blessing, ah, fortune upon her. I happen to be unmarried, providentially. It would, ah, give me great pleasure; I always liked Clarence. Prisons are terrible things, terrible; proper persons will refuse to go to them, will refuse."

They were so absorbed in awaiting Ethelyn's reply to Grane that none attended the clergyman's offer or ob-

served Bernard Grandon as he stepped forth, except the girl herself, and she was conscious of nothing else.

"She shall never marry Rudolph Grane," he solemnly announced. "I forbid it.

"Clarence!" cried the astonished uncle, staggering into the embrace of the sturdy figure. "No, she never shall!" and down his overstrained cheeks coursed tears of relief.

The devil in him got the mastery of Grane; he raged and gloried openly in the misery about to break on these dear friends; and poor Runyon listened with a stupefied stare as the truth dawned upon him, murmuring humbly, "Alas, alas, my course is run; I deserve my doom for believing in that villain."

Grandon allowed the rogue to go on until he had completely unmasked himself before them all, and then walked over to him. Gathering up the front of Grane's collar with his left hand,

"Dog," said he, through his wrath, "you know you have robbed my uncle to accomplish the villainy of this marriage, confess it. You have betrayed your partner's affection to throw on him the imputation of a fraud planned and committed by you to discredit his integrity if he resisted your demands: publicly declare this and restore every dollar or I will——"

The process had already begun, the vise tightened; Grane, who was a large man, gurgled and struggled,

lunging out heavily with his fists, but in a few seconds his wrists were pinioned by Grandon's unrelenting right hand.

Runyon interposed. "Clarence, I can't yet believe all that of him, bad as he is; don't injure him in my house. The love I had shall protect him from it; but I will know if he is a traitor and compel restitution if I can."

Grandon had listened to Grane's exulting with concern. How could this fiend insolently revel in his power to crush them still unless he saw it was not Hallowell that had come but a stranger posing as Hallowell? Runyon also remained overwhelmed, though calling him Clarence. His arrival had not cleared the air as he had anticipated.

But Ethelyn believed him to be her real lover, he was sure, and on that faith he would win. He resolved on a grand stroke: he would marry her under Clarence's name, thus preserving her legacy, and after the ceremony would disappear, leaving the field open for his friend to return and take his rightful place as husband without disclosing to Ethelyn the change. Why need she know? Why need anyone? It should forever remain a secret. Clarence could invent some fiction for his abrupt departure on the marriage night, such as the pressing investigation of Grane. Grandon craved this mission for himself, but Clarence might arrive in the midst of it, bring-

ing exposure and general consternation ; so he must head the latter off in San Francisco to groom him for his character. Were the interchange of bridegrooms subsequently detected, divorce would release Ethelyn to marry the real Clarence, with the stipulations of the will satisfied and the fortune secure.

Staking everything on this venture, Grandon boldly said: "If Ethelyn is willing, she shall be married to-night."

"To whom?" asked several.

"To me."

"Clarence," said Runyon kindly but firmly, though a very great pain shot through his features, "you know this cannot be. I was prepared for much, but not for this. What——"

"Ha! ha! ha!" interrupted Grane, roaring. "Now listen to him, will you, and see what he is! Is he the one to lecture me on what I shall do? Hardships have fuddled him," he jeered mockingly, with another great roar. "You marry Ethelyn! Do you think we've forgotten you? Now, Runyon, come to your reason and settle this and give her to me."

Grandon, though stunned and dumb for an instant, rebounded from even this shock. If he couldn't wed as Clarence for some inscrutable reason into which his deli-

cate position forbade inquiry, why not as himself, with the same result? Divorce would restore Clarence when the hindrances were cleared. He trusted Ethelyn's quick mind to penetrate his purpose.

"I am not Clarence Hallowell," he announced, "I am Bernard Grandon, and as such I ask Ethelyn Runyon in marriage."

The company now relapsed into complete dementia, in which even Grane participated. It was the clergyman who first emerged to expostulate:

"But you know you are Clarence, dear chap; I couldn't know you better if I had baptized you."

Runyon folded his hands on his breast in deep-toned, silent resignation.

Grane, again reanimated, straightened his shattered apparel for a new campaign of hortatory protest.

"If you're not Clarence you can't forbid her marriage to me. I'll have her yet in spite of you. Why, Runyon, what do we know about this adventurer? He may be a bad man; he looks it; we don't want Ethelyn taking up with a shady character, think of the family reputation! a first family!"

Runyon now meekly spoke. "I have shown myself unequal to guiding and protecting those I love through the stormy labyrinths of life. Having been deceived by you,

Grane, I shall never henceforward credit the information of my senses about my fellows. The young gentleman's assertion that he is not Claience would count for little against the affirmation of my eyes, which declare that he is, but that optic declaration is now the strongest proof to me that he is not. Ethelyn shall marry whom she pleases, with my feeble blessing."

Ethelyn disclosed her mind lucidly.

"I never had a thought of marrying Mr. Grane. You have all learned to-night that a woman would better be dead than be his wife. I have felt that all along, and was prepared to end my life this evening before surrendering to him. I will marry Mr. Grandon."

As the reluctant clergyman made them one he shivered as he thought how near the perfect happiness had come to him. Yet happiness in this life, he gratefully meditated, is only meant as a shining frame to bring our moral wretchedness into deeper relief.

The rift in the clouds caused even Runyon to smile and yield to the spirit of the occasion in which all were joyously immersed, and this was Grane's chance. None heeded him as he drifted from their midst to the dressing-room and thence to an exit. A servant swung the door for him and he was on the threshold gliding out when a light touch on the shoulder brought him around, and he was face to face with the interloper from the North.

"Not yet," said Grandon. "Europe can wait a little for you."

"Bring Runyon," he added to the servant.

The veins in Grane's forehead swelled fearfully, he felt an impetuous frenzy to crush this antagonist like a worm, but his aching throat acted as a danger signal warning him from the real encounter with the polar bear which Runyon had earlier spared him.

The door closed again and Grandon stood before it with Grane two paces off, like a mad dog, raging but spellbound and not daring to spring.

Runyon hurried to them with hand outstretched pleadingly, but Grandon checked him.

"You must give this knave over to the law to-night or you'll see him no more," he said. "He has your whole fortune and you can make him dig it up, but put a thread on him or he'll fly."

Runyon was in awe of this authoritative young man who had miraculously rescued him, and after meekly protesting obeyed.

When the business was settled they return to the company.

For a few fiendishly delicious moments Grandon stood with his bride; they looked into each others eyes, she unutterably happy, he in the deepest conceivable abyss of

misery ; he interpreted her look as gratitude for what he had done, and for her sake concealed his cruel anguish ; and a little later, when for a moment they were separated, not daring to trust himself longer with her, he quietly withdrew and started on the long return to that solitary mining camp in the distant wilderness of the north.

Shall I attempt to describe his feelings ? It is impossible. If you had ever been the husband of the most beautiful woman your dreams could picture and had loved her deliriously, if you knew that she loved your dearest friend and that she had wedded only your name and not yourself, to escape a great evil and gain a fortune for her lover and your friend, you might fathom Bernard Grandon's emotions as the train whirled him across the American continent.

In her room that night Ethelyn Runyon passionately wept the first bitter tears of her life, and through the long hours could find no comfort. She loved this stranger and had married him for love, with blind absolute faith that he returned it, and he had not loved her and had gone. Did he think the wealth his act had given her was anything without him ? What had he thought of her ? She loathed herself and her fortune.

The ensuing weeks were busy ones in that family. Grane was savagely fighting Runyon to strike at Ethelyn

through his humiliation and for his own safety. Ethelyn paid the firm's debts and the probing of Grane began, which placed him where he must choose between prison, restoration of his embezzlements, and forfeiture of his heavy bonds and a felon's flight.

When Grandon reached the Coast he was ready to turn back to spend the rest of his days concealed in the neighborhood of his wife. He was of flesh and blood like others, had not these some rights? Again loyalty conquered, and he waited brooding for the boat which was to bring Hallowell. Having clasped hands with his friend and apprised him of the great happiness so desperately conferred, he would set forth on his bleak destiny. He was resolved to conceal from Clarence his own love for Ethelyn that he might not cloud the generous fellow's joy.

"Did you think I was going to lie abed up there all winter?" cried a merry voice accompanied by a hearty blow on the back.

Grandon swung round, and Clarence Hallowell, hale and well, planted his hands on his friend's shoulders, and looking him affectionately in the face exclaimed with concern:

"Why, man, you're the sick one, what is it?"

"The nasty city," stammered Grandon. "It nearly

killed me ; you breathe up north, I'm going there to stay."

"Well, I thought you were made of iron. I've been living on the plan of having you with me and Ethel in town, and now you explode it. No, old fellow, it won't do ; you must come back and we'll make you well. Why, you couldn't have been in the 'nasty city' more than a day, and that never could hurt you ; it was the hard travel. I didn't tell you of Ethel, kept her back for a surprise, and now you shall not run away from us."

"Good heavens!" groaned Grandon, "it won't work, I'm a sick man, I tell you, and must get to regular ways and bracing air. I appreciate everything, couldn't want to stay more, but it can't be, I should be dead in a little while back there."

Clarence studied him, and at length broke into a lively laugh.

"You're fibbing, I can see it in your eye, you never were made for a liar ; so out with the truth quick."

"I'm married," feebly communicated Grandon.

"Married! in this space! where—who is she? what a lark!"

"Don't call it a lark, if you love me ; it's Ethelyn Runyon ; she's in New York."

"To Ethelyn! You never saw her till ten days ago! She's in New York? Then why are you here?" Hallo-

well's face became ludicrous. "If you've left her like that what did you marry her for? Ethelyn isn't a girl to be married and left."

"I know it, you don't have to tell me, that's just it, neither could I if—but I married her for you, you know, and so——"

"Vestibuled stars! for me? What do you mean? Are you blank daft?"

"Yes, that saved her, and you, and her fortune, and everything [but me, he moaned within], and I pulled myself out immediately without saying much to her, you know. You're the only one she loves, she said so; if you didn't know it you'll be glad to hear; and you love her, don't you?"

"Well, I should think so, but if you're married to her how can I be the only one she loves, and how can you give her to me, and why do you want to? I'm gravelled if I can see anything."

"Get divorced, of course," answered Bernard, stiffening to conceal his hurt, for he began to feel that his lofty sacrifice was not being appreciated; "that's what I intended to do all the time. Do you suppose I had any other motive?"

Clarence's face relapsed into complete stupor, but flushed as he inquired, "Was that being quite—you know

what—with a confiding girl? I ought to know Ethelyn Runyon if anybody should, and if she married you she did it because she loved you.”

“Loved me!” screamed Grandon in frantic derision. “Why, it was perfectly understood between us, the same as if she had said it in so many words, that she married me for your benefit and happiness, to get the fortune for you and save Runyon from Grane. That devil had swallowed up everything and held Runyon dangling over Sing Sing, and she had to marry some one to fell the brute. I offered, and I was to get out of the way for you. Her eyes told me this every time I looked at her, they were brimming with love, they spoke volumes, love for you streamed out of them; you needn’t fear, old fellow, but she’ll have you.”

Hallowell fairly stamped in mystified vexation. “Have me! Why, this is the last bubble of lunacy. Do you take us for mercenary wretches who work things that way and go marrying and unmarrying and adventuring for fortunes? We’ve not sunk to that. Is this a hoax, or are you somebody’s dupe? It was perfectly understood between you, was it? She was to have me, was she? And with this understanding she married you, did she? If Ethel led you to think that she’s insane.”

Bernard stopped him. “I can hear nothing said against

Ethelyn Runyon; I'm extremely sorry for what I have done since you take it so ill; I oughtn't to have interfered, though I did suppose you of all men would understand my motive. But I've begun, and I'll go through with my whole duty. I assure you calmly it is exactly as if we were not married. I had nothing in mind but your honor all the time, the fortune had to be saved, some one had to marry her then and there to do it, and I say it finished that scoundrel Grane, who was lording over the whole place. She wouldn't know me if she saw me again, and I honestly believe she thinks she's married to you and that you posed as another to get her, though the others don't think that—they were all flurried, I can tell you. You can simply go in and explain and set things right and take my place. She called me Clarence, and when she pulled my face down and was kissing me——”

“Kissing you! Damnation! All I can say is she has played you a devil of a trick, or you have played her one, or you're both playing me one. She kissed you! and it was perfectly understood between you that she didn't love you; it is just the same as if you were not married; you will hear nothing against Ethelyn Runyon, you only had my honor in mind all the time; you've left her and I may have her, and you are extremely sorry for what you have done! I should think you might be. I don't think I shall

ever trust a friend again, whatever the outcome of this mocking farce-tragedy may be. If it weren't for doing my duty by poor Ethelyn, I should go back to the North, and I can't say that I should ever care to leave it."

"Very well, as things have turned this way, I shall accompany you to New York," said Grandon, sternly, bitterly grieved, "and with Ethelyn for witness set this tangle right. It pains me unspeakably that you, in your intimate relation with that sweet girl, haven't more confidence in her sublime fidelity. Where is there anyone like her? And you talk of returning to her from a sense of duty, with not a word about love."

"And you, having played a very merry part, I should think—or I don't know what from your incomprehensible story—but a part which I consider very astounding, to be mild, for neither Ethelyn nor I care a fig for the fortune you stalk your conduct behind, and she did marry you for love, torture it as you will: I say I can't seem to recognize your conception of either duty or love as one that I ever met before."

Hallowell writhed as he pronounced these words, for he was suffering keenly from friendship's blow.

"Although," continued he, "you have married her and possess the rare jewel of her heart, for you confess that she drew your face down and kissed it, and might possess her entirely if you cared to, what are you but devoid of

the natural promptings of love and deaf to the stern counsels of duty? Great Heavens, how you have changed since I knew you in Alaska! And I can only say that I feel cruelly wronged."

Grandon made no further effort to explain. He was in despair over his friend's perverse ingratitude, and every word of his made it worse; their firm affection seemed shattered; his noble Clarence was taking advantage of a purely formal marriage to free himself from the divine girl who had confided her affection to him, for which nothing could excuse him unless the recent concussion at the camp had shaken his senses—that would account for a moral collapse; but there was no saving evidence of insanity in that lucid eye and ruddy cheek.

They took the same train over the country but different coaches, and scrupulously avoided each other, both the prey of gloomy apprehensions. Each was brooding over the situation of Ethelyn and bewailing the incredible heartlessness of the other.

In New York they hurried to the home of George Runyon. Grandon stood in the background, while Ethelyn leaped into Hallowell's arms. In the midst of his distraction secret hopes had awakened and Grandon nourished them, for if Clarence rejected her was it not possible that she should some time care for him? But these hopes now

faded; Hallowell alone possessed the dear girl's heart. Her eyes showed nights of weeping, so natural after the supposed desertion when she had still imagined him Clarence.

Yet this look of grief did not wholly vanish in her lover's arms; could she have a premonition of his withered passion?

She didn't even glance at Bernard, and stricken in spirit, the poor fellow moved silently to depart as an alien in the circle, to leave them alone to deliver and receive their griefs.

"Hold on, Grandon," called Hallowell, severely, for the tokens of Ethelyn's sorrow had cut him to the quick and it was monstrous to see the cause of it skulking away to escape; "let me at least introduce you to your wife."

"He is nothing to me," trembled from her lips, "he mustn't be considered my husband," at which a last fond lingering surreptitious doubt of Bernard Grandon's died and he longed to follow it.

"He shall receive his freedom as soon as the law can act," she added, more tremulously and faintly.

"And then will you marry me?" asked Hallowell, in a hard, dry voice.

"Don't joke, Clarence; I have decided never again to marry any one but you."

"I told you so, Clarence," exclaimed Grandon, almost overpowered by his strong emotion. "She is wholly yours, she doesn't love any one else; you will marry her, will you not?"

Ethelyn looked from one to the other in amazement. Then light dawned in her and she was transfigured. But Grandon didn't see yet, and Hollowell shrugged his shoulders and scornfully remarked:

"He has raved in no other tune but that since we met."

"I cannot marry my half brother," the girl said, looking with her great melting eyes at Grandon, "but I can love him."

"Ethelyn!" burst from Grandon as he sprang forward to her, "Clarence is your brother? You are my wife!"

When the uncle, alarmed by the cry, rushed in, anticipating new sorrows, he only saw Ethelyn crying and laughing silently upon Grandon's breast and Clarence Hollowell with his long arms folded around both.

